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AMONG THE ESKIMOS OF LABRADOR

AMONG THE ESKIMOS OF LABRADOR

A RECORD OF FIVE YEARS' CLOSE INTERCOURSE WITH THE ESKIMO TRIBES OF LABRADOR

BY

S. K. HUTTON, M.B., CH.B. VICT.

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

WITH FORTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS
& TWO MAPS

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TO

MY WIFE

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author would like to express his obligation to Dr. Wilfrid T. Grenfell for the use of the large map at end of this book.

October 1911.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

My neighbour the Eskimo 21–24

CHAPTER II

Killinek — Nearing Killinek—Eskimos on board—The stepping-stones—Tent life—Snow houses—The Iglo—Old Tuglavi—The troubles of a photographer—Superstitions—The old woman of the sea—The happy hunting grounds 25–45

CHAPTER III

First sight of Labrador—Arrival at Okak 46–54

CHAPTER IV

The freezing of the sea—Sealskin clothes and boots—Winter cold—The home-coming 55–65

CHAPTER V

Little John 66–75

CHAPTER VI

An Eskimo wedding—Home life 76–86

CHAPTER VII

Choosing names—Eskimo childhood—Dolls—Sledges and dogs—Punting on the ice—The little hunter—In school 87–100

CHAPTER VIII

Birthdays—A hard-working people—Joshua the ivory carver—Clothing and cleanliness—Old age 101–113

AMONG THE ESKIMOS OF LABRADOR

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Old Ruth in her Best Dress *Frontispiece*

Labrador 20

A Labrador Iceberg 22

A Group of Killinek Eskimos 28

Old Tuglavi's Iglo 40

The Sea Front at Okak 48

Ramah 48

Eskimo Faces 52

A Fishing Camp 60

The Author, Home from a Winter Walk 60

An Eskimo Nursemaid 82

The Baby's Nest 82

The Eskimo Boy 96

The Eskimo Pocket 108

On the Way to Church 108

An Old Woman Fishing 110

An Eskimo Woman Scraping a Sealskin 110

Walrus Tusks and Ivory Carvings 124

Found in Heathen Graves 124

An Interesting Event 138

Dogs Fishing 150

My Drivers 156

Geshè, an Eskimo Sledge Dog 156

Julius and a Snow House 164

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
The Tired Dogs	174
The Unwilling Puppy	188
A Sledge Party	188
The Author in Travelling Costume	192
Seal Hunters	210
An Eskimo with his Kajak	222
Home from the Hunt	230
Winter Fishing	230
The Spring Flitting	242
The Breaking Ice	248
Tent Life	254
Maria	270
Okak Hospital	270
An Eskimo Great-Grandmother	284
An Eskimo Woman from Nachvak	294
Old Iglos at Hebron	308
An Elaborate Snow Porch	314
An Eskimo Boat Builder	332
Jerry, Organist and Bandmaster at Okak	332
The Eskimo Schoolmaster	336



SKETCH MAP OF THE COAST OF LABRADOR

AMONG
THE ESKIMOS OF LABRADOR

CHAPTER I

The Eskimos

THIS book presents a plain picture of the Eskimos of Labrador, a people among whom I have lived for some years past, and with whom I have come into the closest contact; in their homes, in their work, in their hunting and their journeys, in sickness and in health. I called them my neighbours, not only because they lived close by, but because they showed kindness to me; and I have pictured them as I found them, a kindly and hospitable folk, quick to anger and quick to forgive, whose outlook on life, whose thoughts and ways of reasoning, differ strangely from our own.

The land they live in is a contrast to ours. Can we imagine a wider difference than that between England—the smiling "merrie England" that the poets love to sing—and the bleak, rock-bound coast which is the home of my neighbour the Eskimo? We speak of Labrador as a country, but, if truth be told, we only know it as a coast. To the Eskimos it is very little more. Their home is by the water's edge: they gain their living from the

sea. Fishing, sealing, and walrus-hunting are their staple pursuits; their knowledge of the land itself is limited to the few miles they tramp to their fox-traps, and the longer journeys that they make in the spring on the tracks of the reindeer. They tell of a vast rolling wilderness behind the rocky heights that front the sea; of untold miles of crisp moss upon which no man has ever trodden. Their words bring up an awesome picture of a bare and desolate waste, silent but for the twittering of birds and the dismal howling of the hungry wolf, or the even more dismal howling of the wind. An unknown land! With nothing to tempt the seeker for wealth, and little to attract the hardy explorer, it remains, year after year, wrapped in its awful solitude. The footsteps of pioneers have already crossed the wilderness, but behind the rocky height of the Eskimo Labrador the solitude remains.

Here and there along the coast line of this lonely land are little clusters of huts and tents, and in them dwell the people who have made it their home —the Innuit race, "the People," as they call themselves, better known as the Eskimos.

How they came to the land is a matter for conjecture. A study of their features and habits and language brings me to the conclusion that they are physically allied to the Mongols of Asia; they are obviously identical with the Eskimos of Greenland, and closely related to those of Alaska.

And so it seems likely that in bygone times their forefathers dwelt upon the Siberian coast. Perhaps their adventurous spirit drove them forth, perhaps tribal warfare made them fly for their lives; however that may have been, it seems that they



LABRADOR: A VIEW WESTWARD, NEAR OKAK

Bare black rocks, winding fiords, bold heights and headlands, a pure and bracing air, and a sea of marvellous clearness, combine to make the land strangely attractive. Only the mosquitoes spoil the perfection of the short summer, abounding in unbearable swarms.



A LABRADOR ICEBERG

A constant procession of these icebergs passes the coast in the summer-time, brought by the current from the north. It is impossible to realise the huge size of some of them, since about nine-tenths of an iceberg is under water.

launched their skin canoes and square-ended umiaks (or women's boats), and crossed the perilous waters of what we know as Behring's Strait. They found fish and seals along the Alaskan coast, and some were well content to settle there. Others fared further, slowly wandering along the North-West Passage before ever the civilised world dreamt of its existence. Some reached Greenland; some came southward to Labrador; wherever they saw seals in plenty, there they stayed until their roving spirit drove them on. And so it seems to have come about that in Alaska, in Baffin's Land, in Greenland and Labrador, there are Eskimos, wide apart as miles go, but close together in speech and ways of living. We do not know whether the North-West Passage holds any proof of this long-ago migration; its shores are barren and unexplored; but probably upon this or that rocky promontory could be found the typical burying-places of the heathen Eskimos.

But I must bring my story into the bounds of modern times. To write of the Eskimos as they were in bygone days would be a fascinating thing, but it would mean building upon a slender foundation. No, the past of the Eskimo people must always remain something of a mystery. They have no written records: they are a nation without a history!

It is not very many years since civilization reached them; and so as I wandered among the hills of Labrador I found flint weapons and soft stone cooking-pots beside graves whose bones had not yet returned to dust. Armed with their flint-tipped arrows they hunted the bear and the reindeer;

balanced in tiny skin canoes they followed the seal and the walrus, with flint harpoon ready to hand; they looked after the needs of their bodies, and that was all. They superstitiously dreaded some vague and malignant Power; they paid tribute to the men who were supposed to live in league with this Being; they lived their hopeless life and passed away into the dark. Generation followed generation in the same dismal course: they made no progress. It was to this people that the missionaries of the Moravian Church came in the year 1771, bringing the good news of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, and bringing a power into the hearts of the Eskimos that has elevated them to a life of hope and progress, and made them law-abiding, Christian citizens.

The nearest glimpse we can get of the Eskimos as they were in olden times, is among that tribe which has settled at Killinek, the northernmost tip of Labrador. I have thought it well, therefore, to write first of them, and then to turn back to my old home at Okak, and write of the Eskimos as I knew them so well—a people born and brought up in Christian villages, and living the life which God intended them to live on their bare and inhospitable coast, unspoiled by that darker side which so often shows uppermost when civilization reaches nature peoples.

CHAPTER II

NEARING KILLINEK—ESKIMOS ON BOARD—MY GUIDE—THE STEPPING STONES—TENT LIFE—SNOW HOUSES—THE IGLO—OLD TUGLAVI—THE TROUBLES OF A PHOTOGRAPHER—SUPERSTITIONS—THE OLD WOMAN OF THE SEA—THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS—LEAVING KILLINEK

IT was a sunny September morning in 1908. I stood on the deck of the little Mission ship *Harmony*, watching the bare black rocks of the northernmost Labrador. I was going to see Killinek, one of the loneliest Mission stations in the world. The scenery was terribly bleak, in spite of the sunshine, and I thought to myself, "What an unpromising place! Nothing to see but rocks and water!" On the one hand the restless Atlantic, broken here and there by tiny islets, mere jagged rocks sticking out of the water, and half buried in foam; on the other hand a line of dull coast rising steeply from the sea; a rugged line of black, only relieved by the scattered patches of grey where the moss had found a hold, and by the streaks of rusty iron ore and the glint of falling water. It was a picture of utter desolation, and yet I knew that somewhere among those rocks an Eskimo village nestled; those rocks, to me no more than a picture of barren grandeur, had a different look to Eskimo eyes. They brought visions of seals and walrus, of fat codfish eager to be taken, of shy birds trapped on their flight to more promising places;

dreams, in fact, of plenty; and that was why this tribe of wandering hunters settled in Killinek.

The stout little vessel fought her way through the awkward currents of Gray's Straits: there were two men clinging to the wheel, steadying the ship as she danced and throbbed, and the water was all broken by little whirlpools on which the sea-birds feared to settle. But this was the way to Killinek; and presently we caught a glimpse of the village through a rift in the line of rocks. A flag fluttered up as we passed, and little puffs of smoke among the Eskimo tents showed us that the people were firing guns to welcome the ship. It seemed only a tiny point of life in the most desolate land imaginable, but it brightened us up; and when the rocks hid it from us as we passed on towards the harbour mouth, we felt as if the sunshine had gone.

We turned into a narrow, deep channel, plentifully sprinkled with buoys and marks, and dropped anchor in sight of the Mission station. We were at once surrounded by a swarm of skin canoes, each paddled by a smiling, brown-faced Eskimo. Boats, crowded with women, and with the water all but pouring in, flopped about, waiting for a chance to come alongside; and almost as soon as the anchor had found the bottom the deck was crowded. The folks jostled one another, and peered into our faces. "Aksunai, aksunai," they said; "welcome! be strong." Those of us who knew how to talk started chatting right away; the less favoured contented themselves with handshakes and grins, and shouts of "Hooks-and-eyes" or "Auctioneer," a parody of "Aksunai," at which the Eskimos laughed uproariously. The cook's galley was besieged: here was something new.

"Ai-ai's" of astonishment greeted the mystery of potato peeling. The ship's cat caused quite a stampede, to its own tremendous alarm. It bounded up the rigging like a streak, amid a chorus of "Sunâ unâ" (what's that)?—"Kappê-ê" (what an awful thing)! There it sat palpitating, with hair all bristling, while some one who had seen a cat before told his excited friends that this was "Poosee-kullûk" (poor little pussy)!

But this was no time for dawdling; here was a fine day going, with work waiting to be done. The mate's voice called for hatches off, and everybody volunteered for work. The event of the year, the unloading of the ship, had begun.

I went ashore to explore the village. It was no easy matter to get a guide, because everybody was busy on the ship or on the landing-stage; but I finally managed to button-hole a middle-aged man (only he had no button-holes, nor yet buttons, because he wore the characteristic Eskimo "attigêk" or "dicky"), who spent all his spare time in leading me around and showing me the sights. We climbed the hill behind the village, so that I might get some idea of the scenery. Like a true Eskimo he trotted up at about five miles an hour, while I panted and stumbled behind him in a partly successful attempt to keep him in sight.

From the top of the hill we saw the snow-capped heights of inland Labrador, and on the seaward horizon the long chain of flat islands which we call the "Buttons."

Bob, or Baab, as he called himself, grew communicative.

"Those are the Tutjat," he said.

"Tutjat," I thought, "the Stepping Stones"; and there flashed through my mind the old story that the Eskimos tell, how their forefathers visited the Innuit of the Far North long, long ago.

They came along the coast, so runs the story, to Killinek—the End, or Limit, as the meaning of the word is—and crossed Gray's Strait in their skin canoes. They travelled from one to the other of the long chain of islands as they journeyed northward, and called them Tutjat or Stepping Stones as a memorial.

It struck me that the name is a proof of the truth of the old tale. The name remains, but the story is half forgotten.

Sometimes in an evening, when pipes are lit and tongues are loosed, the Eskimos will talk of those old times. They will tell how their ancestors made this marvellous journey, and found a people across the sea whose words they could understand: Eskimos they were, and only different from the Innuit of Labrador because they had lived apart so long.

And as we looked at the Button Islands, Bob had a far-away look in his restless eyes. He ran his fingers through his tumbled hair; his face grew eager; he waved his pipe towards the north. "Yes," he said, "those are the Tutjat; those are the Tutjat. I went there last autumn, and found plenty of seals. I got a big walrus: I went after him in my kajak (skin canoe), and I harpooned him. I chose him because he was big: he had such fine tusks to make new harpoons, and his skin was good and thick and strong, and I wanted a new whip for the dogs. Yes, those are the Tutjat, and I have been there.



A GROUP OF KILLINEK ESKIMOS

The northern Eskimos are more weather-beaten in appearance than those farther south, as they live mainly in snow huts and tents, without fires, cheerfully enduring the most terrible climate imaginable. The object on the wall is a sealskin, scraped for boot-making and pegged out to dry.

I shall go again some day, for I think I shall catch a white bear, and his skin is fine and warm. It is only seldom that we can go to the Tutjat, for the tide is very strong against our kajaks, and it is far. But I will go to the farthest of the Tutjat, where we can sometimes see Tutjârluk."

Tutjârluk! Another link in the old chain!

From the farthest of the Button Islands, or Stepping Stones, they can sometimes see Tutjârluk, "the Big Stepping Stone."

There it is, away in the haze, a blue-grey patch where sky and sea meet; Resolution Island, "the Big Stepping Stone" of the old Eskimo story. The link is perfect, for from Resolution Island it is but a step to Baffin's Land.

It was fine to see the enthusiasm in Bob's ruddy Eskimo face as he thought of that white bear hunt which was awaiting him among the Tutjat; but he had said his say; he smoothed his mop of coal-black hair with his broad, plump hand, and with his pipe between his teeth he turned to lead me to the village.

"Where do you live?" I asked him.

He pointed along a winding stony path to a smoke-blackened calico tent. "Tuppiga" (my tent), he said, and trotted amiably on. The tent was no more than a bunch of poles with a calico cover thrown over them; the poles stuck out through a hole in the top, and the cover was kept in place by big stones laid upon its edge. The ground was too rocky for tent-pegs, and doubtless stones were the next best thing; but I thought with a shiver of the probable fate of the tent on some wild autumn night.

"Does your tent never blow over?" I said.

He laughed. "Oh yes, it sometimes blows over

when the wind is strong; but *kujanna* (never mind), what does it matter? we can soon crawl out and set it on its poles again and it is all right. The stones do not blow away; they stay there all the time. When the winter comes, and we find snow to build snow houses, we leave the stones lying till we can come again in the spring. I always put my tent in the same place, for it is a good place. That big rock shelters us from the north-west wind, and we can drink from that stream of water near by; besides, we are close to the sea, and I can soon launch my skin canoe and go hunting the seals. Yes, it is a good place, and I shall come again next year. Some of the people do not find good places; they go to fresh places each year; but my place is good."

His face was aglow again and I caught some of his emotion; I felt the glamour of his simple life. I thought of the many times when I have come across the rings of stones, relics of deserted tenting-places. They are generally in some grassy nook near the seashore. The rank grass grows over and among them, and the sandy space which they surround is strewn with fishbones and shells and all the other litter of Eskimo tent life. There is an air of desolation about these rings of stones. Their owners have sought better places for their tents; they have had no fortune at the fishing and have gone to try elsewhere; perhaps they have passed away and are forgotten.

Bob stood for a moment deep in thought and gently smiling. He was dreaming of bygone tenting times; he was seeing visions of rare hauls of seals and fish for the future; but his restless eyes lit on his tent again and he trotted on.

We came upon a little girl squatting on the ground, solemnly stirring the contents of a big black cooking-pot which stood upon a rough fireplace of stones. She fed the fire with bits of brushwood and "shooed" the hungry dogs away. She looked up shyly as we passed, and I saw the family likeness at once. She had the same tumbled mop of black hair, the same little twinkling eyes, the same small nose and plump ruddy cheeks, the same expression of face, as her father. The sound of our footsteps brought three or four other small folks scrambling out of the tent, each one a repetition of the others on a different scale. They joined hands and stood in a row, gazing with awestruck eyes at the stranger. This was evidently part of Bob's family, and a curious-looking lot they were. It was quite obvious that the rule of inheritance was observed in these youngsters' clothing. The trousers which adorned the bigger boy were evidently Bob's, patched and puckered to the required size; one little girl had a woman's skirt on, all the way up, which gave her quite a picturesque appearance; they all seemed to be wearing somebody else's boots. And quite right, too, I thought. They are scrambling over the rocks all day long, romping with the dogs and getting their clothes torn and muddied and soaked; so I rather admired the wisdom of their mother in dressing them up anyhow for their play. The children seemed quite content to stare until further orders: they only grunted when I said "Aksunai," though a grunt in Eskimo is quite polite; so I took a peep into the tent.

The half furthest from the door was evidently the sleeping-place, for it was occupied by a sort of

platform of moss and earth spread with skins. The mother was sitting on the edge of the bed, kneading one of her husband's boots. She looked up as we appeared, with a good-humoured smile on her handsome ruddy face, and quietly went on with her kneading.

Other boots, turned inside out to dry, hung from the poles above her head; they were waiting to be rubbed. This is one of the things that an Eskimo expects of his wife; she must keep his boots soft; and you can well imagine the hunter coming in tired from his latest expedition, sprawling with loud snores upon the platform bed, while his wife takes his boots and turns them inside out to dry, and patiently rubs them supple, ready for his next excursion. Eskimo hunters take a pride in their boots.

Bob's wife reached for another boot, and went on with her kneading.

Close beside her, on an upturned tub, stood the seal-oil lamp. It was no more than a half-moon-shaped trough, hollowed from a soft stone, and half filled with thick brown seal-oil. A flat wick of moss leaned on the edge of the trough, dipping into the oil, and burning with a steady white flame.

Mrs. Bob seemed to be doing a little cookery over her primitive lamp. A battered meat-tin, a castaway, no doubt, from the Mission ship, hung by a string from one of the tent-poles, and twisted, bubbling merrily, over the flame. From time to time she picked up a spike of bone which lay beside her, and poked the wick. This seemed to be all the attention the lamp needed. On the floor I saw a pot of seal's blubber, from which the oil was oozing. From this she could easily fill the lamp

if it should burn low. I warrant she licks her fingers after the filling; and more than that, if she happens to fill the trough of the lamp too full I can well imagine her taking a few sips.

I could not do much more than look into Bob's tent; there was no room. The floor was strewn with relics of work and mealtimes; scraps of seal-skin, fishbones, chips of wood, bits of calico, either flung down as useless or left by the children when we interrupted their play. A fat, pale-faced baby was crawling about, exercising its sturdy limbs before returning to that queerest of queer cradles, the hood of its mother's smock. It found a bone, and squatted to gnaw it, cutting its teeth and acquiring a taste for the fishy flavour of seal meat at the same time. A family of pups romped and tumbled and snarled in their own corner; and all around the edge of the tent lay dogs' harness, spare clothing, sails for the boat, and pots of seal meat and fish heads.

This was a Killinek Eskimo's home.

Bob was well-to-do in his way. He had a home of his own, though it was only a grimy little tent, so small that I wondered how they all packed themselves in for the night.

Some folks are not so well off; they have to share a tent with some other family, a custom which leads to endless quarrels and jealousies. However, times are better since the missionaries came, and the aim of every man to have his own tent or house is being realised in Killinek, just as it has been realised all along the coast.

And Bob was proud of his calico home.

The walls flapped in the breeze and strained against the poles.

"Doesn't the rain come in sometimes?" I asked.

Bob looked at the hole in the top of the tent, where the cover was gathered round the bunch of poles. "Oh yes," he said, "the rain sometimes comes in and trickles down the poles, but we get out of the way." Admirable idea! Imagine the tent-dwellers on a rainy night. With real Eskimo good humour they arrange themselves between the poles and watch the drops collect and trickle and drip beside them. What care they? They are dry, and that is something to be thankful for. But sometimes they are wet, for calico is not proof against the torrential downpour that sometimes comes in summer time at Killinek. I have seen them at work after a rainy night, soaked and bedraggled, and looking, as somebody said, like drowned rats! But they went about their work with the same placid smile; their clothes would dry in the wind and the sunshine. It is part of their life: they are content to take the rough and the smooth together.

The hunter comes home from his morning's toil, drenched with the rain and the spray. There is no fire to give him warmth; no stove to dry his sodden clothes; nothing but a smoky seal-oil lamp. He takes no heed. He contentedly munches his meal of dried fish heads or raw seal meat, and flings himself, wet as he is, on to the bed of moss and skins, to sleep like a tired child. They are a wonderfully hardy folk, able to endure the incidents of their rough life simply because it is their nature. Hunger and exposure are parts of the very existence of a hunter, and only seem to harden him the more.

Sometimes, I think, the cold must be fearful for those Killinek tent-dwellers. From the moist days

of May, when the snow houses begin to melt and threaten to tumble in upon their occupants, all through the changeable weather of the short summer and the biting autumn storms, the Killinek Eskimos live in their tents. Cheerfully, and without a thought that it is anything out of the ordinary, they endure what would kill a European outright. In November, when the sea is freezing and the rocks are coated with salt-water ice, and the snow begins to drift upon the land, they are still in their calico tents. They put on their sealskin clothes, and defy the cold.

Bob seemed rather surprised when I asked him whether they did not find it cold in the autumn. "Illâle" (certainly), he said, "unet"; and with that untranslateable answer I had to be content. "Unet" may mean almost anything, or it may be simply an expression and mean nothing. In Bob's case I took it to mean "Of course; what a question! whatever did you expect?" Bob's eyes twinkled when I spoke of the autumn. "Plenty of seals in autumn," he said. I knew what that meant to Bob; it meant plenty of food and clothes and boots. The autumn seal hunt comes at a most opportune time. It gives the people plenty of their best and most fattening food just when the cold weather is beginning to nip; it makes them sleek and plump for the winter. Even at Killinek the Eskimos do not look unduly fat; their limbs have the smooth roundness of a child's; they are shapely and well proportioned; but, all the same, they have a fine natural protection against the cold. They need no fire to warm them. I have seen them on their visits to stations further south, where the huts are warmed by stoves. They pant and perspire with the heat, and are glad to get out

of doors again. One woman who came to live at Okak complained bitterly of the warmth. "It is breaking my life," she said, "it is breaking my life"; and it was fully a year before she became acclimatised.

They escape from some of the hardships of tent life when the time comes to move into snow houses. It is generally on towards December before the snow lies hard enough for building; the time varies, of course, according to the weather. Mere snow is not enough; it must have been beaten to stony hardness by the wind, and toughened by the cold, before it is fit to be cut into really durable blocks. A snow house for an odd night's shelter on a journey can be put up in a couple of hours, but a Killinek snow house, which must stand for weeks or even months, takes a day or more in building. There are no jerry-workmen in Killinek. They shape the blocks with the greatest care, fitting and smoothing them into a tough wall in which no joints are to be seen, and making the house into a perfect beehive shape without a weak spot in it. The floor is below the level of the snow around, because the blocks for building are cut from within the circle of the wall. This makes the house look small and low; but I know of one which was fourteen feet across, and in which the missionary, a six-foot man, could stand upright and walk. Every house is protected by a wall of snow built round it a few feet away; this is a wise provision in a windy land like Labrador, for it keeps the wind away, and the storms can only whistle about the rounded top, which offers the best possible shape for safety.

The door is a hole, closed by a slab of frozen

snow, and reached by a tunnel along which it is just possible for a man to crawl. The tunnel is dug so that it runs uphill to the door; partly because snow houses are usually built on a slope or bank, and partly because it is the right thing to the inscrutable Eskimo mind.

The window is a sheet of clear fresh-water ice, which lights the house most gloriously. The inside of a new snow house is dazzlingly bright; even the mean glimmer of the seal-oil lamp is reflected and magnified by the shining white walls. That is a new snow house: but after a few weeks, what a change! The walls are begrimed with soot and grease, the floor is strewn with all the litter of an Eskimo dwelling, the air is stuffy and ill smelling —nay, after a time the place becomes unbearable even to its Eskimo tenants, and they build themselves a new house somewhere else. Not a very difficult matter where good snow for building is so ready to hand!

I have found that a snow house makes a fairly snug shelter, though the air never gets much above freezing-point.

Some men "do things in style," and make quite a suite of rooms by joining two or three snow huts by tunnels. One hut serves as the living room, and harbours the big stone lamp or stove; another is the bedroom, spread with polar bear skins; and a third may be a sort of unsavoury store house, piled with dogs' harness, seal blubber, skins, dried meat and fish, and the tent stowed away till the thaw comes.

Beyond the snow house while the snow is hard, and the tent for the rest of the year, the Killinek

THE IGLO

Eskimos have very little choice in the matter of housing; and to look at them, broad and strapping folks that they are, you would agree that such a life suits them well. Since the Mission reached them, a few families have respectable little houses of boards; but in former times the only alternative to tents and snow houses was the awful Eskimo *iglo*. There are a few of these iglos in Killinek—dark and noisome dens.

Try to picture a hut of turf and stones, propped, maybe, on rough stumps and branches which have been toilsomely gathered from the sea: the only ventilation is the occasional breath of air that wafts sluggishly along the dark tunnel-like porch; the only window is a square of membrane, brown and greasy-looking, stretched over a hole in the roof; the floor is a sodden patch of trampled mud! That is a heathen Eskimo iglo; and I cannot imagine anything more dismally unhealthy.

If wooden houses are to be, the wood must be brought by ship. There are no trees in Killinek. The land looked bare and bleak enough, I thought, as I saw it from the ship; it looked far barer when I was actually on it, wandering among the hills. There were plenty of wild flowers, even in Killinek, and plenty of moss; but no wood. Here and there I came upon patches of feeble-looking brushwood crawling among the stones, dry and wizened, and this, I suppose, serves the people for fuel; but the ground was bare of the berries which are such a plentiful food-supply further south. The Killinek people have to go far afield to gather berries, miles and miles of trudging over moss and rocks, to find here and there a sheltered patch, while the Eskimos

at Ramah, only 150 miles away, gather barrelfuls with the greatest ease. Killinek is the coldest, most dismal, and barest of all the Labrador coast—but it is the best seal and walrus hunting place of all. The people overcome their difficulties somehow or other. One old woman told me that she remembered how the men used to travel as far as Okak, 300 miles away, to fetch long trees for making sledges and kajaks. Now they rely on the Mission, and on chance trading or whaling ships, for an occasional plank, or, greatest prize of all, a stick of tough juniper wood or even an old baluster rail to make a paddle.

My visit to Killinek would not be chronicled completely if I said nothing about old Tuglavi. I saw him many a time as I wandered about among the rocks and the tents; a weird, wild-looking old man, with a childish smile on his face. He used to follow me by hours at a time, muttering strangely to himself, and answering all my questions with only a broadening of his constant smile. Poor old Tuglavi! I gave up trying to draw any information out of him after I had tried to take his portrait. I armed myself with a ship's biscuit, and went in search of Tuglavi. I found him near his iglo, and offered him the biscuit.

He took it with a most delighted "Thank you": "Nakome-e-e-ek," he said, "nakomek."

"Adsiliorlagit-ai" (let me take your photograph).

"Sua?" (what?)

"Will you let me make a likeness of you?"

"Atsuk (I don't know). May I eat the biscuit?"

"Yes, presently; just stand over here."

"Nerrilangale" (let me eat it), and he turned his back on me.

"All right; just turn round and stand still a moment."

"Nerrilangale, ner-ri-langa-le-e-e-e"; and the poor old man broke down into sobs and ambled off home munching his precious biscuit. I was left gazing. I never caught him again. Once or twice I heard his shuffling step behind me, and a querulous voice said "I want another biscuit," but not another word could I get out of Tuglavi. What I know about him I have heard from the missionary. He is a famous old heathen chief. He has spent all his life camped among the rocks of the northern Labrador, and nobody knows how old he is. His people have come to the Mission station, bringing him with them; they have heard from other Eskimos of the preaching of the Word of God, and they have come to hear it; but Tuglavi cannot understand. His mind has failed; he is in his second childhood, and spends his time in aimless wanderings and in watching whatever there is to be seen. He manifests an insatiable curiosity, and gets into the Mission house as often as he can, just for the sake of a look round. The kitchen is his chief joy; European cookery is something new to Tuglavi; and he has even been found tasting the contents of the cooking-pots. The missionary good-naturedly put up with the old man's childish ways until he discovered him one day hanging head downwards over the edge of the kitchen water-tank. He seized the struggling legs and hauled their owner into safety. Old Tuglavi had only been getting a drink! Missionaries do not often lock their doors, for fear of inspiring mistrust, but in this case it



OLD TUGLAVI'S IGLO

Tuglavi is a famous old heathen chief, now in his second childhood, and this is his house. It is a gloomy little hut of turf and stones, floored with trampled mud. The porch, about which the children are grouped, is as long as the house itself, and harbours the dogs.

seemed best to keep the old man out of harm's way by putting on an extra latch. Tuglavi soon solved this problem. He found an old broken fork, with only one prong, and by dint of much scratching he managed to raise the latch and let himself in. The missionary promptly forfeited the fork, whereupon old Tuglavi, with much sobbing and lamentation, went home to tell his woes. He presently came back to ask for payment for the fork!

Tuglavi was still at his childish wanderings when I was in Killinek, but the door was no longer locked. Some one was on guard, ready to cheer the old man up by the gift of some scrap or other of food, and show him out again.

Tuglavi brought ~~two wives~~ with him to the Mission station. One was very old—his lifelong companion, in fact, and past work—almost as feeble as the old man himself; so Tuglavi had married a young wife as well, so as to have somebody at home to do the work! I cannot imagine that there was much peace in Tuglavi's iglo.

It is not to be wondered at that superstition is strong among these Killinek folk, so lately utterly heathen, without knowledge of Christianity or of civilisation. The first glimpse I had of it was in the fear that some of them had of being photographed.

I chanced to meet a young man whose face was a perfect picture of the heathen Eskimo type, and to my delight he was willing to pose then and there for his portrait.

I got an excellent likeness of him from the front and then made ready for a side view. But he would have no more. "Tâva," he said (that is completely

finished). I tried to coax him. Would he have it done if there were other Eskimos with him? He hesitated. "Imakka" (perhaps), he said. "Then go and fetch that group of men to stand with you."

Off he trotted, and I saw him palavering with the men. Presently he started back; but stopped at a fair distance and shouted "They cannot come: the lady has their ghosts in her box," pointing to a lady who was wandering on the beach with a kodak, and who had apparently just photographed the group. Then he fled to his tent on the hillside!

Children do not seem to mind: you may photograph them over and over again.

I had glimpses, too, in my talks with Bob and others of the people of Killinek, of the religious beliefs of the ancient Eskimo race as they were in the old heathen days. The idea of a good Spirit did not enter their minds: the Spirit of their heathen life was ill-disposed and apt to sulk. He must be appeased, lest he hinder their hunting and cast an evil spell over them. It was an awful thing to approach his dwelling in the hills; only certain men could venture, men who understood his ways and knew how to ward off his wrath. And so the chosen men used to go to the gloomy heights where Torngak seemed to dwell, taking with them offerings in order that his anger, ever ready to bubble over and destroy them, might be quenched at least for a time. This was the Power in whom the heathen Eskimos believed; a mighty Ill-will, a Being of malice and cruelty. Verily, a hopeless creed; a pitiful thing in comparison with the Gospel of Love in whose bounty they are now sharing.

Their belief in the Spirit of the Sea is less terrible;

but, none the less, they thought that the sea, too, was governed by an ill-disposed power. They spoke of an old, old woman, whose home was at the bottom of the sea. She sometimes used to come up to breathe on the shores of Resolution Island. All the living things that swim the seas were under her control; the fish, the seals, the white bears, obeyed her will. She too must be appeased. If not, who knows but she might send a shark to break up the nets and eat the seals that are already entangled in the meshes! She might tell the seals to swim away, and not go near the hunting-places of the Innuit; she might drive the white bears northward, to infest the rocks of Resolution Island, where there are no hunters; she might feed the codfish with her own hand, and make them lie fat and sluggish while the fisherman plied his hook and line in vain. So she must be appeased; and to a deep channel in a cleft of the rocks the heathen Eskimo would take his broken knives, his worn-out spear-heads, bits of meat, bones—anything was better than nothing—and cast them into the water for the old woman, that she might be in a good humour.

Like all nature peoples, the heathen Eskimos were firm believers in a life after death. Their idea was like that of the Happy Hunting Grounds, with the difference that the best hunting ground to Eskimo ways of thinking is the sea. And so they laid the hunter on a lonely height overlooking the sea. The grave was just an oblong pile of stones, for the Eskimos knew nothing of digging—the only soil on their land is the shallow layer scattered over the hard rock. Within the pile the hunter was laid, dressed in his best clothes; his harpoon was placed

beside him, ready to his hand; and flat stones were laid across the top of his resting-place to keep the ravaging wolves away. In a separate little heap of stones at the head of his tomb his stone lamp and cooking-pot were buried.

Here and there along the coast of Labrador you may see those heathen graves, sometimes grouped into graveyards, sometimes solitary. Look in, and you see the mouldering bones: the harpoon is rotten, and its wooden shaft is almost gone; the lamp and cooking-pot are half buried in the moss.

"Ha," the people were wont to say, "he was a clever hunter; he is happy now; he hunts every night. See how smooth and white his bones are. This other was lazy, he has forgotten how to hunt; the moss is growing over his bones!"

And perhaps some weird old man, with a far-away look in his restless eyes, would say "Yes, I have seen them hunting: yes, I have seen their foot-prints in the snow."

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And I turned away from Killinek content with my visit.

I had seen a tribe of real heathen Eskimos, among whom the Mission has only just begun its quiet work; I had caught a glimpse of their habits and their ways of thinking, of their beliefs and superstitions; and I felt that I should do well to look again at my neighbours at Okak, and remember what they were long years ago, and study them again as they are to-day.

And so I invite you, my reader, to come with me and see the people in their daily life and in their homes; read with me their character, as I have read

it during the years that I have lived among them and talked and travelled and camped with them. And if, by the pages that follow, you are aroused to an interest in their future, and in the efforts made to save them, body and soul, then I am content.

CHAPTER III

First Sight of Labrador—Arrival at Okak

IT was in the month of August, in the year 1902, that I first saw Labrador; and I shall never forget the gloom that seemed to hang over the desolate coast on that bleak summer morning.

There was a chilling mist on the water, and through it I could dimly see a dull and sullen coast line, and hear the ponderous thud of the sea as it beat, beat, beat upon the rocky wall.

It was a dispiriting picture; and when I went ashore and saw the stunted brushwood and the dwarfed and twisted trees all dripping with moisture, and met the hulking sledge-dogs, bedraggled and forlorn, wandering in aimless fashion among the huts, the idea of desolation was complete. But the next day brought a different picture. The sun shone brightly on the neat white walls of the Mission church, and on the moss-grown huts that strewed the hillside; brisk, black-haired little people were running to and fro, bustling to help at the unloading of the ship; there was an air of life and brightness about the scene.

I caught some of the glamour of Labrador; I saw something of the charm of this lonely land, a charm that in some strange fashion makes people love it, that makes old residents who have left it pine to return, that makes even the casual visitor vow to come again. I walked upon the hillside in the sunshine, and

marvelled at the wealth of wild flowers; they were everywhere, rearing their heads among the unpromising stones, and blooming in profusion amid the thick moss that carpeted the ground. Some of them I knew—delicate harebells, and tall foxgloves, and humble scentless violets, and yellow dandelions—and some were strange to me. I found when I gathered a bunch that they soon withered: it seemed as if they were living in a hurry; springing up from the sodden, half-frozen sprinkling of soil that barely covers the rocks, and bursting into brilliant bloom, and withering away, all in the space of a summer that only lasts six or seven weeks. Surely they were making the most of their chance of living: I had hardly thought that the land of Labrador could look so gay. The butterflies were flitting to and fro; the grasshoppers were about, with their queer sudden leaps; the mice and lemmings darted under the stones, bristling and squealing: it seemed such a summer land! So different can two impressions be. But it was not this short summer visit of mine in 1902 that gave me my real impression of Labrador. I rather think of the autumn of 1903, when I came back to the land to make my home at Okak, and to plant a hospital there among the Eskimos.

I remember the tension with which we waited for the cry of "Land!" and I remember with what a mighty roar the steward woke me up, and how I rolled over with a jerk to look through the porthole.

And so I saw again the bare black rocks of Labrador, probably two or three miles away, but seeming no more than a stone-throw. It looked a poor bleak place, but any sort of land was welcome

after a journey across the Atlantic in a 222-tons barque, in the teeth of what the captain rather flatteringly called head-winds, but which turned out to be the equinoctial gales.

I looked on the land with a strange sense of expectancy; and then there came to me the feeling that has come to others, the feeling that there was something away behind it all. It was awfully depressing in itself; but to me it seemed like a veil that might lift and disclose a vision of hope.

I know that in summer the scene is brighter—a picture of bold cliffs and headlands; of long fiords with rocky walls all patched with white and green, where the snow lies unmelted in the shade and the scrubby brushwood flourishes in the sunshine; of stretches of grey moss, and splodges of vivid colour where the wild flowers have got a hold; of distant heights, snow-capped, sharply focussed in the clear air; of blue waters dancing in the sunshine—but I like to think of Labrador as I saw it on that October morning; bleak and silent, lapped by a leaden sea, but giving all the time that charming hint of something to be sought, something to live for. All day long we steamed past bare black rocks, and night fell upon the same grim scenery: this was Labrador.

In the morning we were at anchor off Ramah, in a deep little harbour among the hills. The solitary missionary was in transports of delight. "I had almost given you up," he said, "you are so late": and he went on to tell us how only the night before he had told two men to make ready to tramp over the hills to Hebron, seventy miles away, to ask for news and stores.

While we were chatting, two Eskimos came in;



THE SEA FRONT AT OKAK

Okak is the largest of the Eskimo villages, with a population of more than three hundred. It consists of sixty-five huts, most of them respectable little homes built of boards. Over the porches meat and fish are hung in the sun to dry, out of reach of the dogs.



RAMAH

There is a great deal of beauty in some of these Eskimo villages, nestling in quiet spots among the hills, and close to the water's edge. In summer the ground is carpeted with moss and an abundance of wild flowers, and the scene is an ideal one.

small shock-headed men, clad in corduroy trousers and oily blanket smocks.

Their little restless eyes gazed about with wonderment, the while they gabbled strange words with great volubility.

As fast as one paused for breath, the other took up the tale, and I could not help smiling at their obvious earnestness about something. The missionary sat gravely listening to their speeches, occasionally giving a laconic "Ahaila" (yes); and at the end they seemed mightily pleased, for they went out grinning, with many a sly nudge at one another, and "Nakomêk" (thank you) to the company generally.

Then we got the explanation. "Those are the two men that I told to go to Hebron, and they have been to ask whether they need go, now that the ship has come. I expect there will be feasting in Ramah to-day, for their next question was whether they might eat the provisions I had given them for the journey."

It came out later in the day that one of the men had eaten his pork and biscuits as soon as he got them, I suppose as a sort of foundation for his journey. Actually on the road, he would have been content to chew an unpromising slab of tough dried fish; but I think he must have felt rather relieved when the missionary gave him permission to demolish the pork.

The ship did not dally in Ramah; we only stayed one day, because of the lateness of the season; and on the morning of the 7th of November, 1903, we dropped our anchor in Okak Bay, in sight of the biggest of the Eskimo villages; and there, at the old settlement of Okak, among the dull little

huts that dotted the slope of the hill, and close to the tapering tower of the Mission church, I saw my future home.

When we went ashore there was an Eskimo waiting to hand us into the boat. He stood at the bottom of the gangway steps; and when I looked down on his head all the pictures that I had seen of the Eskimos, and that had seemed unreal when face to face with the people themselves, came back to me.

Here was an Eskimo, black-haired and shaggy-headed, squat and solid of figure, square shouldered and short necked, with small active hands and feet, perhaps a little more than five feet tall, but muscular and heavy of build; and when he looked up it was a face from the picture books that looked into mine, a square smooth face with an oily-looking yellow skin and ruddy patches on the cheeks; his lumpy cheek-bones seemed well padded with fat; his nose was a small flat dab; and he had a pair of restless little eyes that peered out of narrow slits. I handed my wife down the steps, and he helped her into the boat. His smattering of English had a quaint ring with it: "Take care, lady, boat plenty wet—fine day, sir," and I shook hands with this characteristic-looking Eskimo, and thought that I should like to make his closer acquaintance. My wish came true: as I look forward over the years that I am to chronicle I see his face many a time, sometimes smiling, sometimes awkward, sometimes quarrelsome; he gave me some tough questions to answer; he gave me many a trying hour; he did me many a little kindness. The one and the other were so mixed up; he was a thoroughly human Eskimo. Paulus and I became very good

friends, such is my memory of him—and he saved my life once; but that comes later on.

There was a keen wind blowing as the men rowed us across from the ship to the shore, and they had hard work to get along. "Aksuse" shouted the steersman, and the rowers bent their backs and pulled their hardest. Every time they flagged, every time he saw a gust of wind coming, his cry was the same —"Aksuse." Aksuse—be strong; it was the Eskimo greeting, the same word that met us at Ramah when we first touched land, the "Aksunai" of welcome given to several at once; and I saw that the meaning has not dropped out of it as it has out of some greetings.

"Aksuse," shouted the steersman; "be strong—put your hearts into it—do your best," and the oarsmen obeyed with a will. What more noble greeting could you imagine than this old Eskimo password, the people's greeting through all time?

"Aksuse," shouted the folk as we walked along the jetty, and we could not but feel heartened for our task by the very sincerity of the welcome. One man thought to go one better: he had a trifle of English to air: he touched my wife's arm, and held out his hand. "Good evening, sir," he said!

Ten minutes later we were walking round the new hospital. This is a matter-of-fact sort of statement, and takes but a few words in the telling; but it sums up the result of a good many months of downright hard work.

Early in the year the missionary in charge at Okak received word that the hospital was coming. "Would he please make a foundation, fifty-two feet by thirty-six?"

I think a great many people would have been appalled at such a request as this, but we had a practical man to deal with; he simply called the Eskimos together and set them to work, himself toiling as hard as any. They fetched stones from the beach and the hillside; they sent the women and children with boxes and buckets, to carry sand from the patch of sandbank that peeps up at low water; and so they built the foundation.

I wondered, as I walked round the walls, how the corner stones had ever been put in place. They were enormous lumps of rock, and had been raised fully five feet off the ground without the help of any kind of machinery. In fact, the whole feat of building the foundation surprised me, for the beach is covered with ice for nine months of the twelve, so that the pebble gathering and sand fetching must have been accomplished at a marvellous rate for the foundation to be made, and the hospital to be built upon it, all in the space of one short season.

I asked the missionary about those corner stones.

For answer he smiled an inscrutable smile. "We had to pull all together," he said. It appears that they made a tripod of heavy tree-stems, slung a pulley from the top, passed a thick rope over the pulley and tied it to the stone, and then got hold of the rope, and pulled all together! It sounded very simple, but I looked again at those corner stones and wished I had been there to see the pulling.

I understood it better during the afternoon, for a strong wind began to blow, and the oarsmen were unable to row the lighters ashore. The work of unloading threatened to come to a stop, and the captain dared not delay with the Labrador winter



ESKIMO FACES

At the top right-hand corner is a young man of Killinek, the same who was afraid of having his portrait taken a second time. Below is a Killinek boy wearing the usual "dicky" with its fringe of dog-skin. The other two are Johannes, the author's sledge driver, and Tabea, Johannes's wife, two typical Okak Eskimos.

treading on his heels. "Ajornarpok" (it cannot be done), said the men at the oars. "All right," said the captain, "get a rope—get the women—get everybody, and let them all pull." As soon as the word went round there was a stampede to the jetty: women came rushing out of the huts, tying bandanna handkerchiefs over their heads to keep their hair tidy in the wind; children raced from house to house, gathering their friends. "Come and pull," was the password.

By the time the people were ready the rope had been tied to the lighter and passed ashore. The mate on the ship blew his whistle; the man in charge of the rope on the jetty waved his hand in answer and yelled to the people. "Attê" (get at it), he shouted, and the people began to pull.

They tramped along the jetty, clinging to the rope, and singing in time to the march-like beating of their boots on the boards. "Attê, attê," they cried when the pace began to slacken, and then sang and tramped the faster. There was a constant stream up one side with the rope, and down the other side to get a fresh hold, and as fast as the rope came ashore the man at the end was coiling the slack into a neat pile. A jollier lot of people I have never seen; they sang and tramped, and laughed and sang again, as if they had not a care in the world; and all the while the lighter came steadily on, rising to the waves and breaking them down, stopping for nothing, but riding shorewards in. I went on board the ship to watch their work, and from the deck I could hear the sound of their singing borne on a wind that whistled through the rigging. This was "pulling all together," a practical

illustration of the old proverb, "Where there's a will, there's a way"—and that seems to be how difficulties are overcome in Labrador.

I admired the charming simplicity of our missionary at Okak; nothing seemed to daunt him, and he evidently thought the work of making a foundation a very small thing.

"You will have to build a bridge over the brook in the springtime," he said, "the path to the hospital is too narrow"—and there I was, face to face with my first building problem, thinking to myself that I must catch the Labrador courage and be ready for whatever should come, and inwardly praying for the spirit that dwelt in those first old missionaries and that dwells in their followers to-day.

CHAPTER IV

THE FREEZING OF THE SEA—SEALSKIN CLOTHES AND BOOTS—WINTER COLD—THE HOME-COMING.

ON the morning of the 10th of November the *Harmony* was gone, and big and bare the bay looked without the familiar black hull and spidery rigging. It was impossible to avoid feeling just a touch of the loneliness of Labrador on that raw morning, but there was work to be done, and the constant round of duties proved an ideal cure. When a man is busy making and painting and furnishing a home, unpacking a two years' supply of all imaginable necessaries, and at the same time wrestling with a new language and making acquaintance with a strange people, time cannot drag; and I found that the days simply melted away.

The village seemed to have suddenly emptied, for more than half the houses were boarded up and deserted; and I was told that the people had gone back to their autumn seal-hunting, which they had left when the *Harmony* came. As I took my daily walks upon the hills the cold struck dismal indeed. The land was all covered with hard snow, and the beach was crusted with a coating of ice that crackled and boomed as the tides lifted it and left it. The sea had a queer haze hanging over it; it looked exactly as if the water were getting ready to boil, and the vapour was gently drifting with the wind. "Ah," said the people, "the sea

will soon freeze; it is smoking already. That is always a sign that the ice will soon cover it."

Day by day I watched the "smoke," but the wind kept the water constantly tossing, and gave it no chance to set. It was not until the 27th of November that a calm night came, and when I looked out of my window at bed-time the water had a muddy surface in the clear moonshine; and in the morning there was ice.

It seemed strange to look over a great grey plain instead of the white-capped waves; there seemed to be something wanting; and it was some time before I found out that the silence was bothering me. We had got so used to the rustle of the tides upon the beach, and the murmur of the waves upon the bay, that the utter stillness was painful. I think it was my first experience of perfect silence: even in the quietest part of England there is always some sound, near or distant; but as I rambled on the hills that afternoon the feeling was quite eerie. There was not a breath of wind; I seemed to be alone in a frozen world; and I felt really glad when a dog began to yelp somewhere in the village, perhaps a mile away, and my ears at last got something to occupy them.

All the morning the new ice was deserted; there were children playing near the edge, but they seemed afraid to venture far, and nobody took any notice of them. It was not until midday that the grown-ups took any interest in things, and then I saw an old man go hobbling over the beach with a stick.

With proper Eskimo dignity and deliberation he inspected the ice and prodded it; then he walked on it, at first feeling his way cautiously, but soon

more boldly, and came back to say "Piovok" (it is good). He had done his duty, which was to test the new ice, for the people have great faith in their old men as judges of ice and weather. As soon as the children heard "Piovok" they gave a scream of delight, and went racing over the bay—perhaps freed from the shadow of a thrashing that had hovered over them as long as the ice was dangerous —and spent the rest of the day romping and playing "tig" and "sledges" without a fear in the world, and as if there were no such thing as nine or ten fathoms of icy water under them. I took a very short and cautious walk on the ice that first day, but I cannot say that I enjoyed it—it was too nerve-racking by half. The surface had a queer elastic feel and gave way under my feet, like walking on cushions (such was the sensation), and swayed so horribly that I was glad to get off it. On the next day I tried a little skating on it, and thought to myself that nowhere in the world could there be such a place for skating as Labrador, with its hundreds of miles of tough grey ice and its sheltered channels and Norway-like scenery. But I was mistaken about the skating. No enterprising syndicate will ever exploit the North Atlantic Ocean as a skating rink, for on the third day the surface was slushy—the salt was working out; and on the day after that there was a snowstorm which covered the ice a couple of feet deep with hard waves and ridges of snow, and not all the sweeping in the world could have brought the skating back again.

Three days was the most of skating that ever I got in one season all the time I was in Labrador.

With the freezing of the sea the Labrador winter

begins, and I hope that every new comer has the same good advice that I received from my friend the missionary—"Be wise in time: wear Eskimo clothes." I had done my little bit of skating in my English boots, but they had long since proved too cold for my walks on the hills, and the change to native clothes and boots was a welcome one. Mr. Simon said that he would arrange things for me; accordingly the village "tailor," a square-faced, brisk little Eskimo woman, came in one day like a miniature hurricane.

There was no awe, no aloofness about her—she had made clothes for too many successive missionaries to feel anything but business-like; so she stood me up, and looked at me, and measured me with her arms, and bolted out satisfied. "A bit taller than my husband, and not so fat"—was her comment; and the outcome of it all was that after a few days she turned up again with a big bundle, and I found myself the possessor of a "dicky" (blanket smock) and a complete suit of sealskins just like those the Eskimos wear, and all for the outlay of a modest sum in return for the good woman's excellent needlework. Meanwhile I had got several women to work at making boots. Their method of measuring was much the same as Juliana the tailor's: they came in, gazed at my feet, and went out! I was quite unable to see the sense in this, so I laboriously made paper patterns with the aid of the store-keeper and his stock of boots. I gave them to the next woman who came to measure me for boots, and she accepted them with a smile—but the boots she made from them were either too big or too small, and desperately ugly. I confess

that I always got a decent fit when I let the women do the work in their own way, and Juliana explained it easily enough. "Some women," she said, "take up more in the sewing than others, and some are not used to patterns. Now I will make you some good boots"; and without pattern or measure, or anything else beyond her bare word, away she trotted, and in a few days brought me the best pair of boots I ever had. The long and short of it is that boot-making is an art, and the women take it seriously.

Whenever I went into an Eskimo house I found the women and girls chewing something. I imagined at first that they were eating, or chewing reindeer ears (which they cut up into a sort of native chewing gum); but no, they were softening the edges of the boot-leather for the needle. An Eskimo boot is made in only three pieces—the legging, the tongue or instep, and the turned-up, trough-like sole: the bootmaker cuts them out, and hands them round to be chewed. Eskimo teeth are made for the chewing; they meet edge to edge instead of overlapping as ours do; and the chewing of the boot-leather is woman's work from one end of life to the other. Little children who have hardly cut their teeth, old women who are too feeble and blind to do anything else, sit mumbling and chewing; chewing on through life until they can chew no more, or until they have to say, as an old woman once said to me, "I can no longer chew: my teeth are worn away: I am old." And so, through the (to me) mysterious processes of measuring and chewing and sewing, I got my Eskimo boots.

And with the freezing of the sea there begins, too, the real Labrador cold—not the bleak, biting

cold of autumn, when the wind blows from the east over the freezing sea, but the grim cold of winter. Oddly enough, it does not feel so very cold; it is a dry air, coming from the trackless desert of the interior of Labrador, bracing and keen, and lacking some of the sting of the sea wind; but night by night my minimum thermometer sank lower, until, towards the end of January, it could go no further, and the indicator used to stick each night at minus forty. It is the little things one does not think of that show best the power of the winter cold.

One learns to watch one's neighbour's nose on the daily walk; lips stiffen with icicles; hands cannot bear to be without gloves for a moment. Our sitting-room was rather stuffy one day, after a visit from a merry crowd of Eskimos, so I opened the window for fresh air. In a twinkling the pictures on the walls were covered with frost, and the plants on the side table—my wife's own pet little hobby—drooped their heads with one accord and died. I shut the double window with a slam, but it was too late; the plants were dead, and tears began to run down the faces of the pictures. That was my first lesson about King Frost in his own country!

There was a little pantry built next to our kitchen, a tiny room with a felt padded door and a huge brick stove, and there we stored the potatoes and eggs and other things that must not freeze.

On the windy nights I used to make a chilly pilgrimage at one or two o'clock to fill up the stove and save the potatoes.

And ours was a warm house, built of boards and felt in alternate layers. Labrador is a cold place—colder than folks realise. I have heard that in the



A Fishing Camp

Calico tents are used as dwellings during the fishing time. Codfish, split and salted, are spread on the rocks to dry. The people live on the heads, which are not required for market. Here they are grouped about the cauldron in which they are boiling the heads for their dinner.



The Author, Home from a Winter Walk

On a winter's day, with the temperature forty or fifty degrees below freezing point, the breath freezes instantly into an icy mass. Unfortunate wearers of beards get so frosted up that they cannot open their mouths. Sealskins are a necessity, and somebody should watch your nose for the whiteness which is the sign of frostbite.

old days, when the houses were not so good as they are now, the missionaries have had to take turns to sit up all night and keep the vegetables from freezing. It strikes me as a new light on a missionary's life: one pictures him sitting up to comfort and relieve the suffering, but one does not realise that in the interests of his own health in the grim land that he has chosen to serve he must, perforce, sit up and nurse the potatoes.

So much for the winter cold—it is a very vivid memory to me. Early in December the Okak brook was frozen solid, and the people, instead of fetching water, came with hatchets and buckets and carried away lumps of broken ice to thaw. One little girl used to come every day with a sack on a little sledge, and drag it home filled with the smaller bits that other people had pushed aside: it seemed a strange idea—the family's drinking water kept in a sack. As for ourselves, we were rather more squeamish than the Eskimos, who took no notice of the fact that the dogs were constantly trampling their chopping-place on the brook; we sent a couple of men, with an iron tank on a sledge and twenty dogs to pull it, across the bay to the big river. They reached water by jabbing a hole in the ice with a tôk— a sort of enormous chisel with a six-foot handle—and ladled it out with a tin mug. By February the ice on the river was eight feet thick, and they had to make a pit with steps up the side: one man stopped in the pit, and ladled the water into buckets, while the other man carried the buckets up the steps and emptied them into the tank. So we got our water. The men were able to bring about two hundred gallons at a load, and they made it their duty to keep the

Mission house and hospital supplied all through the winter.

Another effect of the freezing of the sea was that the people began to make their way home to the village. All day long some one or other was on the watch, and the cry of "Kemmutsit" (a sledge) brought every able-bodied person tumbling out of doors to greet the new arrivals. Some of the travellers had only come a mile or two, and the dogs trotted up to their well-known homes all fresh and frisky; others had been on the road most of the day, and their dogs were footsore and worn out; it was their first time in harness after the summer and autumn of idleness, and they panted and struggled and whined with weariness, though a few weeks later the same dogs would be doing sixty or seventy miles at a stretch without any trouble.

Every new comer had the same question to answer—"How many seals have you caught?" That was the measure of a man's greatness for the time being; and it was amusing to see some of them swaggering about because they had got twice as many seals as last year. One man had seventy-seven, a truly splendid catch; and this, compared with the average of fifteen or so that usually came his way, was enough to turn his head, and set him bragging of his skill, and of the marvellous things he would do with his wealth. I remember hearing that one of his ambitions was to lay in a stock of tinned mutton, so that he could feed on a higher plane than his neighbours, who must, perforce, be satisfied with seal meat.

By the middle of December the village looked fairly busy, and instead of a mere handful of work-

people straggling down the various paths to the church when the bell rang, each meeting-time brought a bustling crowd hurrying along; and instead of the half-empty church, chill and bare, there was the pleasant warmth of a crackling stove, and the cheerful sight of scores upon scores of brown faces shining with good feeding, and bright eyes twinkling with pleasure. "Home for Christmas" was the uppermost thought in everybody's mind; and day by day the sledges came, and the excitement grew and grew, to culminate on Christmas Eve, when the last belated stragglers hove in sight, and when with a roar of "Tikkiput—kemmutsi-i-i-t" (they are come—the sledges), the whole population of the village went racing over the ice to meet the last comers and hurry them homewards. Not only boys and girls, but staid and stolid fathers of families, mothers with sleeping babies in their hoods, grim old grandmothers and ancient white-haired veterans, joined in the rushing, shouting crowd, careering at their best pace—and a remarkably fast pace, too—over the slippery sledge track. Sometimes those last sledges had been in difficulties on the way. I have seen men come home with their legs encased in ice, showing that on some treacherous place they had slipped through into the sea, and had only saved themselves by clutching at the sledge; and once a sad-eyed party reached the village, with a mother sobbing over the loss of her little girl, who had tumbled into the black water and been lost when the sledge gave a sudden lurch as the ice broke under it. But "home for Christmas" is the great idea: the Eskimos will run a little risk rather than be late, though, happily, the

ice is firm in most years before the middle of December.

And making ready for Christmas was the great occupation in every household. A good deal of decorating seemed to be going on, for the storekeeper was evidently doing a brisk trade in wall papers, and people were constantly coming to me for illustrated magazines to eke out; in fact, I found that some of the poorer ones had their walls completely pasted over with pages torn from various weeklies and monthlies. I, being an Englishman, was often asked to explain the pictures, and hard work I sometimes found it. "Are there really animals like these in the forests of England?" said one innocent old man, as he pointed an oily and tobacco-stained thumb at a page of political cartoons—birds and dogs and lions, adorned with the faces of parliamentary personalities. I did my best, but he could not see the humour in the idea. "There is no sense in it," he said; "if they do not exist, why should there be pictures of them?"

Every house had its Christmas tree, and sometimes more than one. Big Julius, who is the proud father of a family of plump daughters, had a tree for each of the girls, to say nothing of a special little tree at the foot of the grandmother's bed—to the huge delight of the old lady. It is no great trouble to get a Christmas tree; it can be brought home on the top of a load of firewood, for the spruce fir, which looks exactly like the Christmas tree of all our picture books, is one of the few trees that grow in Labrador. The most northerly trees that I know on the coast are a little forest of these firs at the head of Nappartok Bay, forty miles north of Okak. No Eskimo thinks it a hardship to run twenty miles or so with his sledge and

dogs to find a specially neat little tree in some sheltered hollow of the hills: if he has not the inclination to go so far afield, he probably brings home a bundle of spare branches and fastens them into bare places on the tree he has chosen—because trees that grow in exposed places have all their branches on the south side.

In the evenings I used to hear the bandsmen practising Christmas music. Samuel, the performer on the tenor horn, lived in a little hut not ten yards from my window, and there he sat, hour after hour, making the walls rattle with the most weird and awful hootings; and just behind us was the cooper's house, where Solomon, the cooper's growing lad, was taking first lessons on the cornet, and setting all the village dogs a-howling in the moonlight.

The people were home for Christmas—and home, to the Eskimo, is his wooden house at the Mission village.

CHAPTER V

Little John—Poor Akpik and the Custom of the People

WALKING along the winding and slippery path that runs between the houses and the beach, in the congenial company of my friend the missionary, we came upon a group of men bending over an upturned sledge. "Hello, John," said the missionary.

From the middle of the group there came a gruff little voice; it gave the proper Eskimo greeting. "Aksunai," it said.

"Have you just got home?"

"No," said the voice, "I got home yesterday."

"Indeed; I didn't see you—mikkimut, immakka (because you are so small, maybe)."

There was a roar of laughter at this witticism, and out of the midst of the group a small, shock-headed man pushed his way.

His little eyes were twinkling with merriment, his shaggy face was beaming, and his plump little hand was held out for a shake.

He seemed to be enjoying the joke as well as anybody, and he gripped my hand and wrung it, and shouted "Aksunai, aksunai," and laughed and chuckled in delight. I thought as I looked into his eyes, "Here is the smallest Eskimo that I have seen:" most of the Eskimos are small as inches go, though broad and bulky, but here was a veritable pigmy, a

well-built man with brawny muscles, but standing but an inch or two over four feet.

That was my first meeting with little John.

A day or two later I was along the village with a camera, when the same gruff voice hailed me from the roof of a house.

"Hai," it said; "is that the thing that makes pictures?"

"Yes," said I, and looked around for the owner of the voice.

There he was, perched upon the roof of one of the biggest houses, armed with a hammer and a bundle of shingles for mending leaky places. "Aksunai, John," said I.

"Ahaila," answered John; "has it got its habits with it?"

"Habits" (piusingit) I took to refer to the plates which are necessary for the making of a picture, and John's word, which means "the usual things"—as I found later by digging into the dictionary in which one of the old missionaries has recorded his success in translating ideas into a form understandable to the Eskimo mind—was quite a proper one under the circumstances.

"Yes," said I, "it has still a habit unused."

John began to clamber down from his roof.

"Can it make pictures inside a house?"

"Illale (of course)."

"Then come and make a picture in my house"; and he led the way among the snarling sledge dogs that snoozed in the porch, and flung the door open for me crying "Itterit, itterit (go in, go in); Katli, kaivoguk (we are both coming, Katli)."

John was all bustle, afraid that the camera might

"open its eye" before he was ready; and whilst I was fixing the machine among the flour barrels and dog's harness and half-thawed seals that littered my end of the house, John, at his end, was urging Katli and the children to greater speed in their hurried tidyings-up and changing of garments. He flung off his work-stained dicky and sat down in all the glory of shirt sleeves, breathing hard in his excitement, and called "Taimak!" (ready) before Katli had fairly fastened her blouse or tied the baby's cap-strings. Poor Katli was flurried, and with good cause: it is no small thing for an Eskimo woman to be asked to leave her domestic duties and pose for her portrait at a moment's notice, and as the average woman attends to her domestic duties clad only in blanket trousers and shirt, and the duties themselves are not so much cooking and baking—very little of either, as a matter of fact—but rather the scraping of oily sealskins and the sewing of boots, it is no matter for wonder that Katli had a brisk few minutes of sweeping skins and boards and pots on one side, and piling discarded work-a-day clothes behind the little boy, where she hoped they would be out of sight. All the same, the picture is fairly characteristic of a modern Eskimo home.

I could not help noticing the two clocks ticking side by side upon the wall. I asked John, "Why do you have two clocks that tell different times?" Now John's answer was a thoroughly Eskimo one, and delivered with real Eskimo gravity and slowness of utterance. "Last autumn," said John, "I did very well at the seal hunt. I got sixty seals and seven, and some of them were ugjuks (big seals). With so many seals I could pay all my debts and buy many

things that were needful. The missionary says that we ought to prepare for the winter, so I got a whole barrel of flour and a sack of ship's biscuits, and we shall always have bread or biscuits to eat with the seal meat. There is plenty of seal meat, but ship's biscuit makes it taste better, and I like it and the children like it too—and Katli, too. I bought a new coat, and I will wear it on Christmas Day; and Katli bought a new black dress, and the children all have new blanket dickys for the cold weather; and I bought a new lamp, and it hangs over the table so that we can read in the evenings, and I have a bundle of wooden shingles to mend the roof, and a pair of new iron runners for my sledge. And still I had a little money left. I thought I should like a new clock, and Katli said she would like a clock, too; so we each went to the store and bought a clock. Ahaila, the clocks don't keep quite the same time—but it doesn't matter, for the church bell rings for the work-people at nine and twelve and a quarter to five, and we can always tell the proper time by that."

And John's face was grave and earnest as he told me the story of the clocks, and I thought to myself, "These simple folk are just big children." And in a sense my thought is justified; but it seems to me that though the Eskimo is just a big child in his outlook on the wider world beyond his little Labrador, in the things of his own daily life he is a full-grown man. In the grim task of wresting a living from his stern surroundings the Eskimo excels; but apart from this purely material side of his life, there are things in his nature—instinctive Eskimo customs—that one is bound to admire. It was in John's

house that I caught a glimpse of one of the customs of the people.

I happened to turn into the house to speak to little John about some piece of work or other, and found the family at dinner. They all began to rise shyly from their places, but John and I are good friends, and after a little argument they all sat down again and allowed me to sit on a box by the wall and do my talking while they ate. They would have been far better pleased if I had joined them at their food, but no amount of tasting and trying has ever reconciled me to the fishy flavour of seal meat, and they knew it. As John sagely remarked, "You Kablunâks (Europeans) have different mouths from ours."

It was a queer dinner-party. The table was pushed into the corner, and littered as usual with clothes and books and relics of work hastily laid aside, and dinner was spread on the floor. "Laying the table for dinner" was an unheard-of thing in John's household, though there are Eskimos who have arrived at the dignity of knives and forks and a table-cloth. John's family was dining in proper Eskimo style, and on proper Eskimo food, too. The centre of the feast was an enormous iron pot, heaped with lumps and slabs and ribs and joints of raw seal meat, a repulsive-looking pile, only partly thawed and well bedewed with oil.

Round the pot the family squatted, every one, excepting only the baby, armed with a business-like knife. Katli had a half-moon-shaped leather knife that she had been using for the boots; John himself unhitched a formidable butcher knife from his belt, and the others had claspknives or penknives or any

other sort of knives that they could lay hands on. As to the dinner, they all helped themselves, cutting off pieces or gnawing at bones, munching and chewing and rolling the juicy meat about in their mouths, and smacking their lips with relish. Now and again Katli found some specially succulent morsel and gave it to one of the smaller children; and the baby which one of the visitors had in her hood was tussling with a bone, cutting its teeth and educating its little Eskimo palate at the same time. There were several neighbours and friends in the circle, and the meal proceeded briskly without much talking. So busy were they all that perhaps I was the only one to notice a slow, shuffling step passing the window. The footsteps turned into the porch, and I heard the dogs yelping as somebody cleared them out of the way. A groping hand felt for the latch, and the door silently opened. A voice said "Aksuse" (be strong, all of you), and poor Akpik came in, choking and coughing at the sudden warmth. Nobody seemed to take much notice, excepting that John gave a laconic "Ah" in answer to the greeting, and the circle widened to make room for the new comer. Akpik sat down and pulled a knife out of his belt, and I watched him pityingly as he sat helping himself with lean and shaking fingers to the tenderest portions of the meat. It was not long before he was satisfied, for he was sadly listless and weary, and with a simple "Nakomêk" he wiped his knife upon his trouser leg and slowly made his way out again. Again nobody took much notice; John said "Ah," and Akpik shut the door after him.

I was mystified by this strange little drama, and I suppose that I showed my wonder in my face, for

John answered the question that was in my thoughts just as if I had asked it.

"We all know Akpik," he said; "he is a poor young man who cannot hunt or work for himself, and we know that he cannot work because he is ill. I did not invite him to come, but he is quite welcome. Among the people, no poor man will lack for a meal as long as there is food. It is a custom of the people."

And John, having given his explanation, thought no more about it; he was following the custom of the people, and took no credit to himself. Any other Eskimo would have done the same.

Little John is what is known as a clever hunter—that is, he always meets with more than the average success. For this reason he is much respected by the people, in spite of his small size. I took the trouble to look into the cause of his success, and found that it was partly a matter of heredity. His father was a clever hunter in his day. Partly it is owing to John's infinite—or very great — capacity for taking pains. John always catches more trout than anybody else, but he takes a corresponding amount of trouble over his net; he never lets a tear stand unmended, and he is on the watch to clear away bits of floating seaweed all day long. He seems to hit more seals and reindeer with his gun than most of the men, but then he leaves nothing to chance; his gun is always clean, his sledge is ever in repair, and, thanks to his good Katli, his skin canoe is never leaky.

The last time I heard of little John he was within an ace of becoming famous, but the printer withheld his name, so he continues to live his simple

life unspoilt. It was in a halfpenny paper that I read about him, for there was a little paragraph at the bottom of the column, informing the world that the Labrador coast had been visited by a terrible storm, and that two Eskimos had been rescued from a capsized boat in an exhausted condition.

It was little John who rescued them, but the printer did not know that. I remember that storm very well.

It was one of those calm, dull mornings that sometimes come, even in Labrador, when the still and heavy air seems to bring a feeling of gloom and apprehension with it. Some of the shrewder heads among the Eskimos prophesied bad weather, and when, towards noon, queer warm gusts of air came sweeping past, even the most ordinary man could tell that a storm was brewing. But the codfish were biting well, and it is easy to understand that with the end of the season so near—for it was September already—the fishers wanted to make the very most of every opportunity. The bay was dotted with boats, from the line of rocks a hundred yards from the solid little jetty right away to the open sea that stretches to the foot of Cape Mugford, and in every boat sat one or two men, jigging for codfish. They were wearing gloves of black sealskin boot-leather to keep the line from chafing their hands, and they were pulling the fish out of the water as fast as hands could work. The jigger is a bright piece of lead shaped like a little fish, and armed with two barbed hooks, and there was no need to do the patient jerk-jerk-jerk of the arm that the Eskimos will do, if need be, for hours at a stretch; no, as they told me afterwards, "Plenty, plenty fish, ôggak

(codfish) try to swallow jigger before him at the bottom—very fine."

They stayed on the water until the last possible moment, but they are a wary folk, and as the spray came whipping along with the rising wind they took warning, and headed for the shore.

They were none too soon, some of them; they had barely time to drag their boats out of reach of the sea before the wind was howling and the waves were crashing furiously on the rocks.

Round the bend, just outside the mouth of the bay, two men were sitting in their boat absorbed in their fishing. They had misjudged the signs of the coming gale, and it burst upon them while they were still far from shore. They pulled and tugged and strained at their oars, striving all they knew to reach shelter, but it was hopeless. It takes a lot to frighten an Eskimo fisherman; I believe there are no finer boatmen in the world; but those two fellows thought their time had come. They do not remember much about it; all they know is that they found themselves in the water, clinging to the keel of their boat, and staring at each other across it. They could not speak, for the waves were constantly rolling the boat so as to dip first one and then the other under the water, or crashing over and half stunning them; the roar of the gale was in their ears, and they saw glimpses of the rocks slipping past as the wind drove them towards the open sea; without much real hope they clung on until their poor cramped fingers began to slip off the slimy wood; they made a last despairing effort to shout. Then, while all seemed dark and misty, and the sound of the storm was drowsy and far away, they were seized

and bundled roughly into a boat, and that is as much as they can tell. But from Katli I gathered that they had been drifting past a little island where John had pitched his fishing tent. He was safe enough, sensible little man: his boat was in a sheltered cove, and he was enjoying a pipe while the storm thundered at the walls of his calico home. "Jan," said Katli, "nala, nala (listen)—inuk (a man)"; and John ran out in time to see the upturned boat come drifting down. He saw the hands clutching the keel; he heard the faint voices hoarsely calling; he raced to his boat. There was no time to lose, no time for thinking; in another minute the wreck would have drifted past and rescue would be out of the question. He neither paused nor thought, he did what lay before him; with a rag of sail, and a long oar stuck out astern to scull and steer, he pushed out into the storm. He ran his boat against the wreck, and as they raced together before the storm he leaned over and hauled the worn-out pair aboard, and in less time than it takes to tell he had swept his boat between the rocks into safety,

I know little John; I have studied him from all sides, and I know that he is a true Eskimo; he will not brag about that day. I tell you that, if you ask him about it, he will take his pipe out of his mouth and look at you with a puzzled sort of face that seems to say, "What do you mean? I cannot tell you anything"—and then he will turn to his smoking again.

And I tell you that he—aye, and many another Eskimo—would do the same again, any day.

CHAPTER VI

An Eskimo Wedding—Home Life—The Eskimo Baby

ONE evening, at the close of the usual meeting in church, the missionary announced "Kaupat kattititsikarniarpok," which means "To-morrow there will be a wedding"—literally "a tying together." This laconic announcement was all the notice needed, for Labrador knows no such things as publishing of banns and formal engagements; everything was duly arranged, and I looked forward with a good deal of interest to seeing a real Eskimo wedding.

In the old heathen days the young man had to buy his wife: he offered so many seals to his prospective father-in-law, or rather his parents made the offer on his behalf, and if it seemed good enough the bargain was struck, and the delighted bridegroom led his purchase home. Nowadays a wedding is a solemn religious service in the presence of the people.

Young Peter looks about him when his twentieth birthday is past, and finds that he has rather a fancy for Klara up the hill at Isaak's house. Perhaps her good looks have caught his eye; perhaps he knows that she is clever at splitting the fish and cutting up the seal meat for drying—which is about the same as saying that she is a good cook; but almost certainly he has satisfied himself on the most important point of all, that she is a good boot-

maker! If she can dress the sealskins nicely and sew neat, water-tight boots her husband will be a happy man, always dryshod for his hunting, never without nice supple boots to slip on at a moment's notice, and likely to have a few spare pairs to sell to the schooner men, who are glad to pay a couple of dollars a pair for really good ones. So Peter makes up his mind on the all-important question. He goes to the missionary and states his case; or, if he is very bashful, his parents go with him or even instead of him. The missionary gravely nods his head, and sends for Klara's father and mother. Are they inclined to let their daughter marry young Peter? Perhaps it is "Yes": they know Peter to be a handy lad and a smart hunter, and likely to make a good husband.

If they say "No," there is no need for Peter to pine. He has other names on the list: Ruth or Rebekah, or whoever it may be, will do just as well: and if there is no just impediment to hinder the match, a wedding is arranged, and the missionary announces it for the first convenient day.

So on that winter morning I hurried on with my work, and managed to get across to church when the bell clanged at eleven o'clock. I found the place nearly full: certainly all the women were there, and most of the men had snatched an hour from their wood-cutting or had stayed at home from their hunting so as to be in at the ceremony.

Punctually to the minute the missionary came in from the vestry, followed by the young man and his chosen lady. The couple perched themselves side by side on two stools set ready in the centre aisle, in full view of the people. They did

not seem particularly bashful; the young man grinned rather sheepishly as he came in, but the girl was quite at her ease from start to finish, and the two of them sat on their stools very solemn and sedate. We started with a hymn and prayer; then came a sermon of fifteen or twenty minutes duration, pointedly addressed to the parties on the stools; after that the actual wedding ceremony. It was simplicity itself; no ring, no best man, no bridesmaids, no giving away. The missionary stood in front of the couple, and asked them the usual questions; then he joined their hands and proclaimed them man and wife.

After a short prayer and a hymn they adjourned to the vestry to sign the register, accompanied by two grave-faced elders who were to act as witnesses. That register is a curiosity; page after page of Eskimo names in sprawling handwriting, with here and there, at long intervals, a couple of European names to signalise the marriage of one of the missionaries. This serious and weighty matter of signing the register took quite a time, and the village had got back into the swing of work before the newly-married couple came out. I watched them from my window. The young man plodded stolidly ahead, stuffing tobacco into his pipe as he went, and the bride did her best to keep up with him. She lifted her skirt to hurry; she planted her feet in the deep pits her lord and master was making as he trudged through the soft snow; she did her best, but she lagged.

He never turned his head. It did not seem to strike him to offer her his arm; the custom of the people was for the bride to follow, and she followed.

How easily one might misjudge the Eskimos from little scenes like that! He did not seem to care? Ay, but he cared. He proved to be a model husband, affectionate, kind, and faithful, and a smart hunter withal, well able to keep his little household in proper Eskimo plenty. They had a little wooden cabin of their own, and lived as happy as a pair of humming birds. But in public he must be the "boss." The eyes of the village were upon him that morning, and he had to maintain his dignity.

I thought to myself as I watched that couple tramping up the hill to their hut that the very fact that they had a home of their own meant a great step forward from the days of heathenism.

To have a house of his own is the ambition that fires every young Eskimo on matrimony bent, and I could not help contrasting the life in our little village of Okak with the life among the wanderers of the north, who think nothing of crowding two or even three families into a tiny skin tent, and whose sole ambitions are to see good hunting and to have a shelter from the weather.

I have known it happen in Okak that a young fellow acting as servant or assistant to one of the richer hunters has been absorbed into his master's family by marrying one of the daughters, and the young couple have been accommodated with a corner or a room; but when a young man's fancy has soared as high as marriage it nearly always continues to soar until he has a home of his own.

It may be only a mean little shack, built of rough tree stems and floored with packing cases; but visit that home, and you see at once by the proud smile on the young folks' faces that an Eskimo's house is

his castle. And there they live in their little wooden hut, until mere ambition—or the number of the little toddlers—prompts the young father to tack a wing on to his house, or to pull it down and build it again on a larger scale.

There is never a home without children. The birth-rate is high, and most mothers have a family of ten or twelve.

If no children are born to a home, or if, as sometimes happens with the terribly high infant mortality that prevails among the Eskimos, the little ones die off as soon as they arrive, that home need not remain childless. An Eskimo orphan never wants for foster-parents. In so small a nation blood relationships are close, and intermarriage has made "cousin" a bewildering term. That means that an orphan always has relatives of some sort willing to adopt it; and in the odd case of a child being stranded without kin, as sometimes happens when people have come to the stations from distant tribes, the hospitable Eskimo nature comes into play, and some couple comes forward with the offer of a home.

Adoptions are very common. Sometimes families simply exchange a child or two; generally somebody wanting a boy hands over a superfluous girl in exchange; but this does not always end satisfactorily. It is all very well while the children are little, but when they get into their teens the boy's father sees a good useful lad working for foster-parents, and he wants him back. The foster-parents very naturally object: they have had the trouble and expense of rearing the boy, and are beginning to look for some return. So the quarrel begins. Relatives on both sides are dragged in to palaver; the head

men of the village are fetched to smooth things down or to add counsel to the confusion; and finally the missionary is consulted, and the dispute is settled.

Who would not be an Eskimo baby? The very first nest it goes into is a charming bag of baby-reindeer skin, with the fur inside, soft and warm; and there the baby sleeps, safe from all draughts and chills and cold toes. Hung on the wall, or propped against the end of the bed, the bag looks like a giant watch-pocket; indeed, one good Eskimo housewife must have been struck by the likeness herself, for she brought me a miniature one when I left Labrador, and told me that it would do to keep my watch from getting sick with the frost.

The baby spends most of its early days asleep in its bag, stuffed feet downwards into the hood of its mother's sealskin or blanket dicky, but as time passes and it begins to feel the desire to kick, it discards the pocket and nestles in the depths of the hood, and you may see its beady and wide-awake eyes peering over its mother's shoulder as she walks along. Sometimes the mother tires of the weight, and, for the sake of a rest, dumps the baby on a snowdrift to play. "Poor little mite!" I fancy I hear somebody saying, "will it not catch cold?" But there the fat little object sits, chuckling and goo-ing and grabbing handfuls of snow.

I have often seen small girls playing nursemaid, strutting along with the big hood hanging lumpily over their backs, and the long tail trailing on the snow. They have no big hood of their own; a girl is not allowed to have one until she is old enough to get married; so the little girl who sets out to act as nursemaid borrows her mother's. She would be

helpless without a hood; to carry the child in her arms, or to try to wheel it in a "pram" or drag it on a sledge would never satisfy it; the hood of the woman's dicky has been the Eskimo cradle longer than memory can tell, and the gentle shrugging of the shoulders, or the to-and-fro swaying of the body which swings the hood in such a soothing fashion, are things which come naturally to every Eskimo girl.

I think that there is no more useful member of an Eskimo household than a growing daughter; she minds the baby while the mother attends to the sealskins; she chews the leather and helps at the stitching of the boots; she fetches water from the brook and scrubs the floor—and in a busy time a good many Eskimo floors are scrubbed to clear away the traces of seals every day; she makes herself useful about the house in countless little ways, and even goes out fishing if there is nothing else to do; and yet, when they first saw her, I warrant her parents said they wished she had been a boy! A boy is different; he is not of much use until he is old enough to go to the hunt; he drives off with the sledge and dogs and fetches firewood, or helps at the chopping, maybe, but most boys seem to spend the greater part of their time amusing themselves. Ah, but the boy is going to be a hunter, and there is a glory about that: nothing else is half so great, to Eskimo eyes, as a really clever hunter; and the father who sees his boy running wild, up to all sorts of daring pranks, and growing headstrong and self-willed, takes but little notice: the boy is growing up healthy and strong—some day he will be a hunter.

How the mothers spoil their children! And



AN ESKIMO NURSEMAID

While the mother is busy at home scraping the sealskins or making boots, the growing daughter acts as nursemaid. Clad in her mother's sealskin dicky, she walks about, with the beady eyes of her baby brother peeping over her shoulder.



THE BABY'S NEST.

The Eskimo baby will nestle in its mother's hood for hours, and the mothers go about their work apparently unconscious of the baby's presence. At a whimper they tumble the baby out head foremost to feed it, or shrug it gently to sleep.

boys, of course, they pet and pamper far more than girls; the child nearly always gets its own way. There is no such thing as punishment in an Eskimo household, and very little restraint; and I am inclined to think that some part of the high death-rate among the children, and especially the higher death-rate among the little boys, is due to the laxity with which the parents allow their children to grow up instead of wisely restraining them.

Oh those children: the perky little rascals!

One day I was walking along the path that runs in front of the houses, and I came upon a small boy clambering down among the rocks and hummocks that strewed the beach. He was a sturdy little fellow, and quite a baby. I judged him to be two years old or so, certainly not more than three; but he was clad in the dignity of ridiculous little trousers, so I must speak of him as a boy. He seemed to have escaped from his mother, and to be making for the beach on an adventure of his own; and when I looked towards the line of houses I saw a young woman standing at one of the doors and calling to him.

"Kaigit, kaigit" (come back), she shouted.

The child took no notice at all.

"Kaigit, ernera" (come back, my son), cried the mother.

This time the child looked round, but he went steadily on, barking his little knees against the sharp points, and tumbling into holes in his hurry: "Nia, nia," he screamed. I half expected the mother to come and fetch him after that, for "Nia" is anything but polite: it was the equal of a very defiant "Shan't" that the child shouted at his mother. She took no notice; she was beaten, and accepted the situation

phlegmatically; she turned back into the house to get on with her work.

Meanwhile I was interested in the doings of the small boy: there was some grim purpose in his little mind, and I stayed to see the finish of the play. He scrambled on until he came to a dog that lay sunning itself behind a stone. Very likely it was one of his father's sledge dogs against which he had a grievance, for he caught it fearlessly by the scruff of the neck, and beat it with his tiny fist. The dog, great powerful brute, could have eaten the boy whole, as it were; but it made no resistance, simply cowering and whining under the little patting blows. I am certain that the boy did not hurt it, but it is bred in the slinking nature of the Eskimo dog that anything in the shape of mankind is master, irrespective of size, and so the tiniest children, masterful little mites, play among the dogs without any misgivings. Having fulfilled his purpose the boy administered a last parting smack, and started on his voyage homewards again, leaving the dog yelping and wheezing with misery and terror.

I followed the little fellow to his home, and found his mother busily brushing the snow off him, and smiling with pride in her hardy little son. He was disobedient, but what cared she? He was growing strong and fearless; some day he would be able to drive a team of dogs and paddle a kajak, and hunt the deer and seals and walrus; he was a proper Eskimo boy.

Not many days afterwards I went into the house and found little Abraha in bed. This was a strange sight; it was surely not a case of illness, for there was no mistaking the mischief that twinkled in those

bright little eyes that followed all my movements; but here was Abraha in bed in broad daylight, while all the other boys—and babies too, for that matter—were shouting and playing out of doors. I cast about for a cause of the phenomenon. "Ah," I thought, "Abraha's mother has an eye to her boy's welfare after all: it is not all callousness; she has the mother's instinct to care for her children."

Above the stove there stretched a string, and on the string there hung a row of little boots and trousers and shirt and dicky, sopping with moisture and steaming in the warmth. So there was a limit to the lengths to which the child might go unchecked. "Yes," she said, "he has tumbled through the ice and got wet through, and he must stay in bed till his clothes are dry: I cannot let him have his Sunday clothes, for he would spoil them—uivêtokulluk" (the little rascal)—this last with a smile of real motherly pride at the restless little fellow in the bed. "Aksunai, Abraha," I said; and Abraha turned his face away with a sheepish air, and buried himself in the bedclothes.

Many a time, as I have watched the children in the village, I have said to myself as this or the other little boy trotted past me, "How like his father he is growing!" It was partly face, for many Eskimo children are ridiculously like their parents in looks. Partly it was clothes, for the same hand (the mother's) cuts and sews the clothing for the whole household, and often the clothes of the bigger ones descend to the smaller ones in turn, so that from one cause or another the peculiarities in the cut of the father's clothes reappear in the rest of the family wardrobe. Partly it is because the grown-up folks

keep the plump limbs and rounded outlines of the child, even when they have passed middle age. And partly it is the inherent tendency to imitate, which is strong in the Eskimos, and which the children—living, as they do, constantly in the presence of their parents—have every opportunity of cultivating. And so the little boy grows like his father; he has the same pose, the same stride, the same lift of the feet, the same way of holding his hands; in fact, in his every manner, and especially in little mannerisms, he is his father over again.

CHAPTER VII

CHOOSING NAMES—ESKIMO CHILDHOOD—DOLLS—SLEDGES AND DOGS —PUNTING ON THE ICE—THE LITTLE HUNTER—IN SCHOOL

IN heathen times the Eskimos had heathen names, and rare mouthfuls of the language some of the names were, great unwieldy strings of letters, sometimes with a meaning, appropriate or otherwise, and sometimes without. Among the heathen people who have lately settled at Killinek, I found a boy and a girl both called Nippisâ, and I came across a little girl whose parents knew her by the burdensome title of Atataksoak (grandfather)!

The Christian Eskimos who people the Labrador coast to-day have proper baptismal names, mostly Biblical, such as Moses, Laban, Thomas, Miriam, Sarah, and so on. This habit of choosing Bible names seems a very fitting one among a people reclaimed from heathenism; it is a constant witness and reminder of the change they profess and of the God they serve. And I like those old Bible names that I met among the Eskimos, for the people steer clear of the long and difficult names, and choose those that are simple and dignified and easy to pronounce.

I can well imagine that the large assortment of Samuels and Labans and Michaels and Jonathans to be found along the coast used to lead to some confusion, and that is the reason why the Mission ordained some years ago that the heads of the various

families should choose distinctive surnames. And I can imagine, too, that the business of choosing caused a lot of deep cogitation in those Eskimo minds, and a lot of scratching of heads and rumpling of hair. Some men solved the difficulty by doubling their Christian names, like Laban Labanê, and Josef Josefê; others chose Eskimo words, such as Sillit (a grindstone), which is the surname of our Okak organist, and Kakkarsuk (a little mountain), or Ikkiatsiak (a shirt). Some adopted the name of their occupation, like Illiniartitsijok (the school teacher) and Igloliorte (the house builder)—the latter being a man's polite way of referring to his work as village coffin-maker.

Others went further afield in their search. One happy-faced fellow invented a new word; he called himself Atsertatâk, "because," he said, "that is like the noise that the little birds make, and we are as happy as a family of little birds."

Some chose ordinary English names which they had heard among the schooner folk, and spelt them in extraordinary Eskimo ways, like Braun and Grîn; and others honoured the missionaries by adopting their names. One of the most dignified families in Hebron goes by the name of "Mess"; and I can only think that here the man chose what he thought an absolutely unique and unhackneyed Eskimo surname from the lettering on the top of a barrel of Prime Mess Pork standing in the passage of the Mission house.

So the Eskimos got their surnames, and are handing them down from the last generation to this.

The Eskimo mother is not a stay-abed person; she is quite ready to bring her baby to church for

its christening on the third or fourth day of its life. In fact, I have seen a mother bring her baby on the very day of its birth, explaining her hurry by saying that codfish were plentiful, and her husband really could not stay in the village any longer, but must leave at once for the fishing camp. There is not as a rule, much trouble about choosing a name: some relative or other is sure to be anxious to have an Attitsiak (namesake), and he or she is honoured if it be possible. A few years ago one of our numerous Abias was on the point of becoming a grandfather, and he obtained a promise from his son and daughter-in-law that the child should be named after him. Unfortunately, as it happened, the baby was a girl; and, to his great disappointment, the fond grandfather found that his own name was unsuitable. But the young parents put their heads together, and planned a splendid way of overcoming the difficulty: the old man should have his namesake; so they called the child Sopia, the Eskimo version of Sophia and the nearest to Abia that a girl's name could be, and Sopia she is.

It struck me as an odd custom that a woman who marries a widower should give her first child the name of her husband's late wife, but so the custom often is.

If there are no relatives or friends who particularly want a namesake, there are plenty of Bible characters whose names can be used; and nowadays some of the great names from history or from public life are to be heard in daily use among the Eskimos.

The pronunciation is sometimes quaint, and the names may be almost unrecognisable—Pita for Bertha, and Edua for Edward, for example—but that is only the way they have struck the Eskimo ear.

CHOOSING NAMES

Another characteristic custom among Eskimo parents is that, when one of their children has died, they will almost certainly call the next arrival by the same name. I have even known the queer name of Ananias handed down from boy to boy in this way, in order, as the young parents said, that the child's grandfather might have an Attitsiak. "Ananias!" I said. "What an awful name for a baby!" "Aha," said the father, "but it is not after Ananias the liar, but after the good Ananias, who gave Saul back his sight."

I remember one young couple who were unable to settle on a name. There were so many eligible namesakes that they could not choose one without, as it were, snubbing the others. They carried their perplexity to the missionary. He, wise man, took a safe course. "My own name is Henry," he said. "I shall be very pleased if you will call the baby after me; and I hope that everybody else will be pleased, too." "Piovok" (it is good), they said; "his name shall be Henry."

Now comes the real Eskimo touch: little Henry failed to thrive; he pined away as so many Eskimo babies do, and died.

During the following year the parents were consoled by the birth of another boy; and without hesitation they named him Henry after the little Henry they had lost.

Only very few of the Eskimos have more than one name given in baptism; the people seem to be well satisfied that one name is enough; but I have known cases where parents who have lost several babies one after the other give the latest arrival two names. I wondered whether away at the back of

their minds they have the old superstition that two names give the child a better chance of living.

As I sit, pen in hand, looking back over those fascinating years in Okak, there come to my mind pictures upon pictures of the Eskimo children at their play; and I think again, how true it is that the play-time years of childhood are a preparation for the active work of grown-up life. "The child is father to the man" is a saying that holds true of the Eskimos even more than of most peoples. The Eskimo baby is born to live an Eskimo life; the boy will grow up to be a hunter like his father; the girl will be a mother some day, busy over the clothing and the sealskins and the bootmaking; and the inherited aptitude for the ordinary work of an Eskimo life shows itself and shapes itself in the children's games. I have seen the girls playing at "shop," and the boys playing at "rounders" with a rag ball, but these are games that they have learnt from the missionaries' children, mere interludes in their ordinary play.

An Eskimo girl plays at being mother, just as girls do all the world over, and there is generally a baby brother or sister to lend reality to the play. The real mother does not bother much about the baby if there are big sisters to look after it.

If there is no baby to be nursed, the girls play with dolls. I suppose there have been dolls among the Eskimos from time immemorial—dolls of stone or bone, scraped and scrubbed into shape with hard flint stones; dolls of wood, with wide-eyed, staring faces, carved after the Eskimo cast with high cheek-bones and broad, flat noses; and dolls nondescript, mere bundles of rags, or rather of sealskin scraps,

tied with thongs at waist and neck, and with features only visible to the fond little make-believe mother.

But I am encroaching on the unknown things of the Eskimo past: wood and sealskin moulder and perish: time crumbles them to dust; and no visible proof of such dolls remains—excepting the inborn skill that the Eskimos have in making and dressing dolls.

Some of the little girls are the proud owners of flaxen-haired dollies from the English shops, but most of them are content with the native article, whittled from a stick of firewood by a fond father; but whatever sort of doll it be, the little mother dresses it in Eskimo clothes. I have seen the children sitting on the floor, planning and chattering, cutting out clothes for their dolls after the unchanging pattern, making dickys and trousers with a due eye to the economy of cloth, and learning, all unconsciously, to cut and make the real clothes. By daytime the doll is an Eskimo baby, poked feet first into its little mother's hood, and marched from side to side of the hut or among the houses in the village: and, if she does not know that she is watched, the little girl will put on all the serious air of motherhood, and sway her body to and fro, hushing and humming to get the fractious baby to sleep. At night the child undresses her doll, and lays it to rest on a scrap of reindeer skin spread on a toy bedstead of boards, and covers it with a gay quilt, and leaves it to sleep while she clambers into her own wooden bed and pulls her own reindeer skin or patchwork counterpane over her. It is the little girl's chief game, the serious game of learning to be grown up.

The boys are playing the same game in their own

way, but it always seemed to me that there is vastly more fun and frolic in a boy's life. One of the most fascinating relaxations of our long winter was to watch the boys at play. Every day we could hear their shouts as they romped and tumbled in the snow. They rolled huge snowballs, and hollowed them out and hid in them; they built proper little beehive snow huts, and joined them by tunnels under the snow; and, more than anything else, they sledged and slid down the hills. There was a steep slope beside my window, where the drifting snow had filled the bed of the stream, and this was the great sledging-place. I watched them with a good deal of trepidation as they careered down on little wooden runners strapped to their feet—miniature ski, whittled from a stick of the family firewood—but I never heard of an accident. However fast they were going they seemed able to dodge the lumps in the path, and avoided collisions by twisting round in a sharp curve. If they fell at all, they always seemed to tumble into a snowdrift, and picked themselves up and shook their shaggy heads, and tramped up the hill again shouting with laughter. Sometimes they tried the less exciting forms of tobogganing, dragging out little sledges made for one, and built after the Eskimo pattern with the cross-pieces bound with thongs to the runners, and bumped madly down the hill; or a party of boys and girls joined at one of the big travelling sledges, yelling and laughing, and shoving one another off into the snow; but the boys preferred their sliding shoes.

The rush and rumble of the runners on the hard snow was a regular feature of winter life; and on the dull days, when the wind roared and the snow drove

pelting against the window panes, I quite missed the merry noise. Sometimes there was a louder din than usual, and this generally meant that four or five were huddled together on a big sealskin for want of a proper sledge, clinging to one another and roaring with the delight of a new sensation. The sealskin seemed to slide easily enough when the hair was right way on, but it twisted and lurched over the lumps in the track and ended by turning wrong way on and spilling its passengers into a snowdrift.

I have even seen the little rascals sliding down the hills without anything at all in the shape of a sledge, trusting to the wearing qualities of their sealskin clothes; and sometimes I have seen indignant mothers pounce round the corner and drag their bright-eyed urchins off to less destructive play.

Sometimes a man's first present to his son is a toy whip, with a lash five or six feet long, and children hardly out of their babyhood crawl about the floor shouting at imaginary dogs and dealing vicious smacks at them. Out of doors the boys play with full-sized whips, and it is marvellous to see how cleverly the little fellows wield the thirty feet of lash. They set an empty tin on a hummock of ice and flick it off time after time from the full length of the whip; or two of them wage a hot battle, each trying to entangle the other's lash. But whips are only accessories to the great game of sledge-driving, and an Eskimo boy's most constant plaything is—the dog. The men always hand the puppy dogs over to the boys; it is a training for both boy and dog, for the boy uses all the tricks and mannerisms that he has seen his father use in driving the big sledge,

and the unwilling puppy is compelled to make a trial of harness.

If there is a little sledge to be had, so much the better; the boy can sit upon it and enjoy all the delights of real travelling; if he has no sledge, he harnesses the pup to a block of ice, which does very well for a makeshift. These boys are wonderfully keen teachers; they have all the thoroughness of the trained Eskimo hunter; and only one who has tried to drive a team of Eskimo dogs can know what a stock of patience and perseverance the child must have to teach the puppy to keep its trace tight and to know and obey the words of command. Most of the boys are wise enough to train one puppy at a time; but I once saw a big hulking lad trying to teach a team of three, and naturally enough the three were hardly ever all on their legs at the same time. While one lay down to whine and whistle the others would wander off in opposite directions to the extent of their traces, and, finding themselves fast, they too would lie down and whistle just as the boy had persuaded the other to move on. The experiment was not a success, for after a time the lad got angry, and there seemed to be more temper than teaching in the thrashing he gave those poor pups. Of course every boy's ambition is to drive full-grown dogs, but when that day comes his playtime is over, for he must be off with the sledge to fetch firewood or seals. For sheer merriment there is nothing to beat the sledge-game without dogs, when six or seven of the boys slip the harness on their own shoulders and race away with the sledge, wheeling this way and that at the command of their driver. They enter most heartily into the fun, crossing from one place to another in

the team, just as dogs do, snapping and yelping and whining and tugging to be on the move every time the driver calls a halt.

Whatever game it be, you may be sure that they are playing it thoroughly, even though it be only the mischievous game of walking in the water and getting their boots wet. Mothers and fathers only wink at these water-pranks; the boys are growing strong and hardy, and that is a great thing for a hunter; and, after all, their mischief is never malicious.

Springtime provides the most exciting game of the whole year, when the ice breaks, and the tides that come oozing up the beach bring great pans and little flat pieces floating shorewards.

A floating piece of ice makes a splendid raft, to Eskimo ways of thinking, and I have seen crowds of our Okak boys standing in ones and twos on these very unstable punts, and moving along by paddling with their hands in the water or prodding at the bottom with poles. The favourite idea is to put a boy on a big ice-pan and shove him away into deep water, and then, after leaving him helpless for a suitable time, to scramble and pole along to rescue him. Sometimes a dog is pressed into service to play this Robinson Crusoe sort of rôle; but the dog generally considers itself in real danger, and does not wait for a formal rescue; on the contrary, it takes matters into its own hands (or paws), and after a time of terrified whining slips miserably into the water and swims ashore.

I watched one bold spirit among the boys who had found a long and narrow piece of ice that struck him as a suitable kajak. He tried hard to stand on



THE ESKIMO BOY

A favourite boys' game—punting on the broken ice in the spring-time—and all the more dangerous because none of them can swim.

it, but it was too wobbly, and time after time he only just escaped a ducking by great agility; at last he squatted on it tailorwise, balancing himself with his long two-handed "pautik" (paddle), and steered to and fro among the floating ice with all the skill and grace of the practised kajak man.

After the ice has broken and gone, the Eskimo boy becomes a sailor. He borrows a boat, and hoists the sail, and fares forth before the wind for the sheer joy of beating back against it. It sometimes seemed a reckless game, for I have seen little fellows of six and seven, with a calico dicky hoisted on an oar to catch the wind, tacking to and fro against a breeze that made the little boat heel over on its side; but they are knowing fellows, and very rarely come to grief in spite of their daring.

The mastery of a boat seems to be another of their inborn gifts; indeed, one of our very occasional visitors at Okak told me that among the many people he had seen he had never met with boatmen to excel the Eskimos.

If the wind drops, the boys use the oars, and use them strongly, too: it seems hardly believable, but mere babies have the knack of rowing. Little Abraha, next door to us, was often on the water by himself before he was three, standing up because his legs were too short for him to get a grip if he sat, and tugging away at the pair of little oars. It is strange to me that these children do not learn to swim; they are on the water every day throughout the summer, and dabbling in it when they are not on it, and yet only a few can swim a stroke. It is the only way in which their childish energy seems wasted, though probably swimming does not strike

the Eskimo as a necessary accomplishment. In all their games the children are training hand and eye, and learning things that will be useful some day: and, above all, the Eskimo boy likes to feel himself a hunter.

He makes a crossbow out of any bit of wood that he can find—a stave of the family flour barrel answers remarkably well—and goes out to shoot birds. His weapon is not a formidable one, and he does very little destruction; but, sometimes, when the tame little snow buntings are fluttering about, gathering for their flitting in the late autumn or just arriving in the early spring, the little crossbow answers well to the steady little hand and keen eye, and, though it seems cruel to think of it, the Eskimos have little birds for dinner. Boys of thirteen or fourteen go up the valleys with real guns, hunting hares and ptarmigan; but this is serious work, for powder and shot are too precious to be wasted on mere play.

A boy came to our door one day, and asked for an empty meat-tin. A few minutes later I saw a lot of them with harpoons, enjoying an imaginary seal hunt with the meat tin for quarry. They had flung it into a big pool left by the tide, and were taking turns at spearing it. They flung their heavy harpoons, and splashed through the water to fetch them, amid a chorus of triumph or derision according to their skill. Some of them were able to "kill" the tin every time, but the smaller ones found the harpoon too heavy; the inborn skill was there, for one little fellow had a toy spear of his own, and was flinging it like a thorough artist.

So these little hunters learn to be men. It has

been the same ever since the Eskimos were known; far back in the old heathen days it was the same; the child was a prospective hunter. As I wandered on the headlands that jut into the sea from the heights of Okak Island I found many an old heathen grave, with the mouldering weapons and the moss-grown pots laid beside the mouldering bones; and I found the children's graves among the rest, with the tiny toy lamp and cooking-pot and the toy harpoon placed beside the child when they laid him away in his heap of stones above the frozen soil.

And to-day, when the Eskimos are a Christian nation, touched by the finger of civilisation, the children, boys and girls, are spending their playtime in fitting themselves for the hard life that is their heritage.

But nowadays life is not all play, though it be playing at work. During the months of winter, when the people are grouped at the Mission stations, there are regular school hours for the children. I walked in one day at Okak when Benjamin was drilling arithmetic into the heads of a score of bright-eyed little Eskimos, and the picture of that Eskimo school class is one of the most vivid of my many pictures of Labrador life.

"What is four times four?" said Benjamin. The little eyes stared, and the little mouths opened, and the little fingers began to count under the shadow of the desk. Benjamin made it easier. "I saw four sledges," he said. There was a general heave of interest: Benjamin was going to tell them a story. They shuffled their feet and elbows, and settled down to listen. "I saw four sledges: they

were coming round the bend from the sealing-place. Each sledge had four dogs to pull it. How many dogs were there, gathered all together?"

That made thinking easy; the little brains had got something familiar to work upon; there was a picture of sledges in their minds, and like a flash came the answer, "Sixteen dogs—they are sixteen." "Yes," said Benjamin, "four times four makes sixteen; don't forget." The little faces were serious again: it was not much of a story, after all; but they had learnt something without expecting it. Wise man, Benjamin; he was an Eskimo child himself once, and has had a careful training from the missionaries; he has learnt to present things in a way that the Eskimo mind can grasp. After a few more exercises with the table-book I saw the little eyes becoming restless; thoughts were beginning to wander; and Benjamin called for a change. Shock-headed little Moses fetched the books out of the cupboard, and handed them round, and the chubby faces brightened again.

Benjamin announced a psalm, and the little fingers grew busy as they turned the pages; and then I saw first one boy and then another stand up to spell through a verse. It was really wonderful to watch the eager way in which they pursued the alarming strings of letters that stretched from margin to margin, and gathered them into syllables under Benjamin's guidance, and made out the proper meaning. When the psalm was finished Moses collected the books; then the children sang a hymn and ran out to romp in the snow.

CHAPTER VIII

BIRTHDAYS—A HARD-WORKING PEOPLE—JOSHUA THE IVORY-CARVER—CLOTHING AND CLEANLINESS—OLD AGE

ONE little family custom that has gained a firm place in the hearts of the Eskimos is the celebration of birthdays.

This appeals to their sense of the picturesque, and a birthday is never allowed to slip by without some little attempt at marking the day. What the number of years may be makes no difference; elderly folks are just as fond as the children of the tokens that make the day a special one; and Eskimos are not people who are shy of letting their ages be known; indeed, a fiftieth birthday is a time of special jubilation.

Many a time I have gone into houses and found decorations of moss and green leaves, or coloured paper when there are no leaves, fastened upon the walls, and as likely as not the number of the person's years worked in moss or wool and hung up like a wreath for all to admire; and I have shaken hands with men and women—aye, and babies too, for the babies must be noticed—and have said, "Your birthday, eh? how many years are you?" which is the very height of Eskimo politeness. Friends go running into the house to offer good wishes; there is food for those who care to eat—seal meat or codfish for certain, and maybe a hunk of home-made dough plentifully besprinkled with currants.

They are great times, these birthdays; but there is nothing riotous about them. The dances and orgies of heathen days are forgotten, and instead you may hear the sound of singing. Many a time have I passed along the village in the dark of the evening and have heard the charming sound from some little hut; the old familiar hymn tunes sound very sweet in the loneliness of Labrador. First one voice, then another, rises above the balanced harmony; and I have stood listening, with a queer lump in my throat, as verse followed verse and hymn followed hymn; and I have known that this was the family gathering that brings the Eskimo birthday to a close.

There is much that is pleasant in the memory of life among these Eskimo hunters. In spite of their thoughtlessness, their sometimes unreasonable demands, their excitability, their proneness to quarrel, in spite of their repulsive habits, and the occasional glimpses that I got of their native distrust of people from other lands, there is a warm spot in my heart for the Eskimos. In my memory of them the good qualities overbalance the bad. But in spite of the fascination of life in Labrador, I do my utmost in this book to write of the Eskimos exactly as I found them, and I believe my picture of them to be a plain and unvarnished one.

One of the most winning things about the Eskimos is their very simplicity; so simple and direct they are that at times they can be too confiding. They speak slowly, and seem to weigh their words. On the other hand, they have the gift of graphic and fluent speech, and can describe their doings with thrilling gestures and telling emphasis when they choose. But they must get warmed to

their subject; a mere question will not set them going. I thought that they must have a great fund of anecdote and adventure; and so they have, if they only knew it. I imagined that a question would start the hunter on a long recital of hairbreadth escapes and thrilling races after runaway dogs, of fights with polar bears, and lonely nights among the wolves in the woods. But no; these adventures and escapes are commonplace to them; so much a part of the Eskimo life that they are passed over as too trivial to notice. I heard from an old missionary that Abia, my next-door neighbour, had been in his youth the strongest man in Okak, strong enough to kill a dog with a single blow of the whip from the full length of the thirty-feet lash. And I used to put leading questions to Abia, such as—"I suppose you sometimes met bears when you went to your fox-traps?" or "You were a very great hunter, were you not?" but Abia's mind was on the present; he had no room in it for reminiscences; and he would say, "Yes, I used to be a great hunter, but I cannot hunt now, I am old. My son Samuel can hunt, and he is now gone after seals. I have been chopping firewood to-day."

And they can talk furiously. They are very excitable, and fly into a passion over a trifle.

But though they are quickly aroused, they are just as easily appeased. A man may be in a terrible temper, and with his wild eyes and tumbled hair and waving arms make a very threatening picture as he jabbers and shouts; but a few minutes afterwards he is friendly and smiling again, bearing no malice.

I heard very little of family feuds or long-drawn quarrels while I was among the Eskimos: the

nearest to any such thing was the case where a man, long years before, had stolen an axe from another man's house, and the descendants of these two men used to remind each other of the episode whenever they happened to have a quarrel in hand. When they do quarrel it is next to impossible to avoid hearing them, for they stand out of doors, pouring forth voluble streams of grammatical language by turns, at the top of their voices. The horrible old heathen blood-feuds have gone, and a peaceful and friendly tone, both among themselves and towards strangers, is one of the characteristics of the Eskimo people to-day.

There is just a little reserve with strangers, but I found as I went in and out among them that their shyness wore off, and I was able to watch them at their work and learn their characteristic ways. I was rather surprised at first to find so many of the men asleep in the daytime; and when I went into a hut and saw the father of the family, a lusty middle-aged Eskimo hunter, sprawling snoring over a box, or curled up on the bed or the floor, I could not help thinking him a lazy fellow. This is the usual first impression. But I know that the Eskimo is a hard-working man: if he is asleep in the daytime he has earned his rest by trudging through the soft snow of the woods to his fox-traps, or driving his dogs to fetch seals.

The Eskimos are a hard-working people, but they have their lazy side: they are apt to dawdle over work to which they are not accustomed. I had to employ a good many men at carpentering and building, and I found that they needed almost constant supervision if the work was to go ahead

with any speed. Even with supervision the work came foreign to their nature, and more than once on fine mornings the workmen failed to turn up, and I learnt later in the day that they had been tempted by the beautiful weather or by a report of seals in the bay, and had gone for a change in the form of a day's hunting. Women scrape sealskins or sew boots from morning till night; but set them to pile the firewood to dry on the hillside, and they sit and chatter, or even, some of them, fall asleep, unless you keep an eye upon them. But I could never call the Eskimos lazy after seeing them trot forty miles or more in a day, or sit rowing for twenty-four hours at a stretch, or work like Trojans the whole day through to let the Mission ship catch a favourable tide for sailing.

No, my impression of them is that they are a hard-working people. On stormy days the men sit at home, smoking and talking; they make nets or plait strips of walrus hide into dog-whips, or do any bits of work that may be necessary; they may even be busy carving ivory. If there is no work to be done, they sprawl and chat and smoke and slumber.

Ivory carving is practically a lost art among the Eskimos. For one thing, walrus tusks are too scarce since the walruses have been scared away northward, and the people need all they can get for the making of harpoon heads; for another thing, time is too precious nowadays, and there is not a good enough market for the quaint little figures of men and sledges and birds, and all the animals that an Eskimo knows; so it comes about that the modern Eskimo young man does not bother to learn ivory carving.

There is a little figure standing on my table as I write, a tiny white bird, and it carries me back to the

day when I first landed at Okak. It was Joshua who brought it; a short, squat figure of a man, with a great mop of coarse black hair and a shaggy black beard—Joshua Nujaliak (the bearded one), called after his beard because beards are a rarity among the Eskimos, better known as Joshua the Ivory-carver. That little bird was Joshua's "meeting present": he gave it the name himself, and, although I have heard of parting presents, this was the first meeting present in the course of my experience. "Meeting present," said Joshua; "me come say how-de-do"; and though my knowledge of the language was at that time limited to the single word of greeting "Aksunai," Joshua's smattering of English helped the hour along famously.

He described his carving work to me, mostly in dumb show, making jags in the air with his arm to represent a saw, and rubbing the imaginary work with a stumpy finger, to the accompaniment of a grating noise in his throat, which, I suppose, meant the file.

"No plenty aivek (walrus)," he said, holding two fingers to his mouth to represent the tusks, so that I might not misunderstand him; "all gone bye'm bye —no more tusks to carve."

Poor Joshua did not live to see many more aiveks; he died in the big influenza epidemic of 1904. My last meeting with him before I saw him on his deathbed was in July, when a schooner, bound for Hebron, ran into Okak Bay to find a pilot.

After a little cogitation Joshua was chosen; he knew the way along the coast, and he knew enough English to make his meaning plain; so off he went to get ready. Half-an-hour later I watched him

stalk majestically down the jetty, clad in all his finery. I do not mean that he had donned his sealskin boots and trousers, and the special white "dicky" that he kept for church; no, the office of pilot appealed to him as demanding something extraordinarily fine, and so he marched proudly along, clad in hob-nailed boots and striped trousers, with a big flapping frock coat hanging loosely from his shoulders, and his long black hair crowned by an ancient chimney-pot hat.

Under ordinary circumstances he would instinctively have seized an oar; but on this splendid occasion he sat bolt upright in the stern of the boat, occasionally clutching at his beloved hat lest the gusts of wind should snatch it from him, and allowed the schooner's crew to take him on board.

Good-hearted, simple-minded Joshua, he did the piloting all right; but he took to his bed soon after he got home, and we had to bid him good-bye. I lost a good friend when Joshua died; and Labrador lost the best of the old Eskimo ivory-carvers.

The art is passing; from lack of tusks and the call of the hunt less and less time is given to this interesting pursuit, and every year sees fewer and fewer of the quaint little figures sent home for sale: the native skill is there, and only needs rousing, as I have proved by getting some carvings done in wood and soft stone.

No matter at what time of the day I went into the Eskimo houses, the women always seemed to be busy with the sealskins; but, for some of them at least, there are times when they put the skins aside and ply their needles on softer stuff; and they turn out some very neat and pretty embroidery to ornament

their Sunday dickys. Their taste lies in the direction of brilliant colours and startling mixtures; and I was amused to find that Deborah, our best needlewoman at Okak, had mixed a few glaring pink flowers among the delicate pattern that she was working in art shades of green and brown at the order of an English visitor.

Deborah thought that the pattern was vastly improved by these vivid dabs of pink; and, after all, the result of her quaint ideas was characteristically Eskimo.

Whatever work they may be doing in their homes, it is quite likely that the women have discarded their skirts, and are clothed in blanket trousers, as the old style was. It struck me as a sensible sort of dress for them, better suited to the work they have to do than skirts which get draggled and oil-stained; and yet, I suppose, the reason that they so seldom appear in public in their trousers is that they are afraid of being laughed at. Probably shyness has led to their adoption of the skirt, for they are far more common at the southern stations, which touch the fringe of civilization, than at Okak and the villages further north, where there are still women who go about their daily work in trousers. I had no difficulty in persuading them to be photographed in their national dress; they are, in their inmost hearts, proud of it, and save a specially fine outfit for festival days in church. When I went to take a picture of old Ruth I had the good fortune to get a snapshot of another old Eskimo habit. Ruth was highly flattered at the idea of a photograph, and became quite excited about it; in fact, her face was perspiring so with the fluster into which she had worked herself, that before doffing



ON THE WAY TO CHURCH

This is the Eskimo festival costume: sealskin and blanket boots, trousers of blanket and deerskin, and a gorgeously embroidered sillapâk with a tail almost to the ground. The baby perches in the hood during the service, and a gentle hunching of its mother's shoulders is all it needs to rock it to sleep.



THE ESKIMO POCKET

A characteristic Eskimo custom. A woman pockets all her smaller belongings in the leg of her boot. Her baby, and anything else too big for the boot, she puts in the wide hood of her "dicky"—a sort of long-tailed smock.

her skirt for the picture she wiped her face—and pocketed her handkerchief in her boot. That is the Eskimo pocket! Big parcels go into the hood, along with the baby; but the woman's boot is the hiding-place for all her smaller treasures. I have seen hymn-books, biscuits, pipes, bits of bead-work or sealskin pockets for sale, wools, rolls of cloth, money —all sorts of things, stuffed into the convenient wide leg of the boot.

It is no easy matter to write so as to give an adequate idea of the stage at which the Christian Eskimos have arrived in the things of cleanliness. The heathen were dirty by choice; or rather, they were dirty because they knew no better, and because they were content to remain so. Things have changed since heathen days; lessons have been taught; and my life in Okak gave me some small hint of the difficulties and the prejudice that the old pioneer missionaries had to face in making a beginning.

There is now a foundation to build on; the children of to-day are born of parents who have learnt some of the lessons; they have from their birth some of the ambition to be neat and clean which is so clear a mark of civilisation. I cannot hold the Eskimos up as a cleanly race; they have an immense amount to learn; they are still far behind true civilisation in habits of cleanliness and sanitation; but this I can say, they are far, far ahead of their heathen brothers.

It may, I think, be fairly said of the Eskimos to-day that they keep themselves and their clothes remarkably clean considering the nature of their work. In the north, where no trees grow, and seal-oil lamps provide light and a meagre tinge of warmth for the

huts, the people look dirty. The huts are small, and all the work of skinning and dressing the seals must be done in them because out-of-doors everything freezes as hard as stone; and so the work-a-day clothes are black and shiny with oil. But by every bedside there stands a box, and in that box is a clean outfit for Sunday use. I can imagine that that was the beginning of the lesson in the hands of those old missionaries: "Come to the House of God neat and clean"; and if any proof were needed of the truth of my idea, it could be found in the person of a man who died at Nain some three or four years ago. The poor fellow was deaf and dumb from birth, and had learnt to talk in signs; and his way of saying "Sunday" was to rub his hands over his face—"The day on which he washed his face"!

I found the people using soap and water fairly often, and taking a good deal of pride in their appearance; in fact, the women and girls are very fastidious indeed about their hair, and wash and comb it with real feminine pride. As for the washing of clothes, that they do in their own way. They wet them and soap them, and then drop them into the brook and trample on them; and there they used to stand, in a pool in the brook just outside my window, trampling in the shallow water, singing and talking to pass the time, and, alas, puffing at their pipes.

It seems strange that the Eskimos should be addicted to so essentially an Indian habit as smoking. How did they learn it, and when? Was it the "pipe of peace," after one of their old quarrels, that started the craving? Or did they first get it from passing vessels? Perhaps so; but who can tell? Eskimos and Indians are hereditary foes; even in my



AN OLD WOMAN FISHING

Seated in the shelter of a hummock of snow, with their eyes protected from the glare by goggles of smoked glass, these old folks spend hours fishing through holes chopped in the ice. They are not troubled with cold fingers, and at the end of the day they drag their catch home upon little sledges.



AN ESKIMO WOMAN SCRAPING A SEALSKIN

The skin is stretched over a board in a tub and the woman is preparing it for boot-making by scraping off the hair. Formerly the shoulder-blade of a seal was used for the scraping, but the rounded saddlers' knives are now used.

time I have seen Eskimos scared at the mention of "Indian," and when I travelled southward my drivers once asked me in awestruck voices, "Shall we see the Allat" (Indians)?

However it be, there it is; the Eskimos smoke. Men and women alike—aye, and unless my eyes have deceived me, children too, in a furtive way—all puff with real relish; though happily the women are shy of allowing themselves to be seen with the pipe between their teeth.

In my visits to the Eskimo households I could not fail to be struck by the patience and devotion with which the people care for their aged ones. The old man or woman, feeble and past work, is sure of a home with a married son or daughter or other relative, and if the poor old body has no relations, there is enough hospitality in the hearts of the poorest of the people to make them open their homes to the needy.

I found age a very deceptive thing. "Sixty-two" might be the answer from a bowed old figure crouching over the stove—I would have guessed twenty years more than that. The fact is that the Eskimo wears out fast; after fifty he begins to decline, and few live long after sixty. I have known a few over seventy, and the people told me with wonderment about an old woman who lived to be eighty-two, and who worked to the last; but these are great rarities, and it must be a unique thing in one's lifetime to meet with an Eskimo great-grandmother. These very old people nearly always seem to be active to the last; they have an unusual store of vitality; and they die in harness, dropping out like those who are too tired to go any further, and passing

away without illness or suffering. They are always those who have clung the most closely to their own native foods, and can always speak of having been mighty hunters once upon a time.

Their activity and endurance are remarkable. Women who are too old and toothless to chew the boot-leather can still scrape the sealskins, perhaps with a skill that the younger women lack: if they are too blind and feeble to scrape, they can sit behind a wall of snow upon the sea-ice, and jig for the sleepy rock-cod through a hole. "Are you cold?" I asked old Klara. She laughed in her shrill old way: "I am an Eskimo," she said. Old Abia, my white-haired neighbour from the hut under the shadow of the hospital wall, was a most energetic old fellow. He used to make me anxious for his safety. One morning I saw him go off over the ice, dragging a small sledge. I thought he had gone to gather sticks along the sledge track, and that he would be home in a couple of hours. He was not at the evening meeting, however, and a meeting in church was a thing that he never missed.

I searched for his white head among the rows of black ones, but he was not there. His son Samuel was in the choir all right; I could hear his powerful tenor when we sang; so I waited for him after the meeting and asked "Abia, nannekâ?" (where is Abia?).

"A-a-tsuk" (I don't know), answered Samuel.

"Where did he go this morning?"

"A-a-tsuk."

"Had we not better go and look for him?"

"A-a-tsuk," said Samuel, with a grin; "kujanna

(never mind)—the old man is all right—he is an Eskimo!"

Then Samuel went home to bed.

Old Abia turned up smiling the next afternoon, dragging a sledge-load of trout behind him. He had suddenly bethought himself of a lake among the hills where he used to catch trout. He walked the ten miles to the frozen lake; jabbed a hole in the ice with his "tôk" (square-headed spear); and then crouched over the hole dangling a bit of red wool in the water, and spearing the trout with his "kakkivak" (trout-spear) as fast as they came within reach. Before he was satisfied night had fallen, so this hardy old Eskimo of sixty-nine lay down to sleep in the open. He woke up fresh and happy in the morning, and after another turn at trout-spearing he dragged his load home—and thought nothing about it!

CHAPTER IX

Making a Sledge—My First Sledge Journey

As soon as the winter was fairly established I began to think of visiting some of the other stations by sledge. With this idea in mind I consulted Jerry and Julius, the two men who made it their business to fetch our drinking water, and asked them about a sledge. There was a respectable-looking sledge about the premises, a year or two old, maybe, but good enough for us to take on our occasional trips about the bay, and I asked the men whether this would do for a trip to Hebron.

They were unanimous and very emphatic. "Piungitoârluk" (it is awfully bad), they said, and besought me to let them make me a good sledge. "Very well," I told them, "you shall make me a good sledge, and I will take you with me to Hebron." They were delighted, beaming and chuckling with glee, and could hardly be persuaded to finish filling the water tanks, so eager were they to be at work on the new sledge. They were prepared to take the whole thing in hand, from start to finish, and next morning were off to the woods at daybreak in search of a big, straight tree for the runners. I happened to tell the storekeeper about their objections to the old sledge, and he, being a man well used to the ways of the Eskimos, smiled rather broadly. "The sledge is not so bad," he said; "our postman carried the mails to Nain with it last week; but the postman made

that sledge, and your water-men did not. That makes a good deal of difference."

"Just so," I thought; "the Eskimos are like everybody else: every man likes his own handiwork the best!"

In the dark of the evening Jerry and Julius came home from the woods, helping the dogs to haul an enormous tree stem. I was astonished that such a big tree was to be found in Labrador; but the men only smiled. They had been a good many miles that day, struggling through the soft snow of a sheltered valley that they knew, where the trees are shielded from the winds and have managed, in the course of centuries, to reach a useful size.

I think I am right in writing of "centuries" in the life of those trees; for the superintendent of the mission, Bishop Martin of Nain, planted a seedling fir to celebrate the birth of his first son; and when I saw the tree where it stands in a sheltered nook on the hillside at Nain, it was knee high—and that was soon after the young man's twenty-first birthday!

Jerry and Julius got one advantage from using Labrador wood for my sledge; it needed no seasoning. "Ay," they said, "there is no wood for sledges like the Labrador wood; and that is why the Avanêmiut (northerners) send to Okak for their sledge wood."

Next morning I found them sawing the tree into planks; Jerry, being the more learned man, was playing top-sawyer and guiding the saw, while Julius stood underneath and knotted his great muscles with the power of his pulling. They had a workshop all ready close at hand; it consisted of two big blocks of frozen snow set about six feet

apart, and on these they laid the planks to be shaped and smoothed. I offered them the use of the carpenter's bench in the hospital, but they declined the offer with scorn. They were better used to their open-air work-bench, and seemed to use the tools quite well with their hands cased in thick sealskin gloves; at all events, the sledge-making went on apace, and each time I went out I found them a little further on with it. All the men who had any time to spare were clustered round to watch, and, no doubt, to keep up a constant fire of comments; but the chatter was always good-humoured, and the men seemed to get on the faster for it. As my sledge grew under their hands, I found that they were making it sixteen feet long, and two and a half feet broad. It had twenty-six cross-pieces, and never a nail did they use. "Kappê," they said, "nails no good: plenty soon break: seal-hide ananâk." They set the runners on the blocks, and bored holes for the binding: then stood them up a couple of feet apart and bound the cross-pieces to them, first the front and back ones, then the middle one, and then the others to fill up the spaces. There was a gentle upward curve from back to front—to make the sledge rise better to the snowdrifts, they said; and the runners were not set quite upright, but splayed slightly outwards—to keep the sledge from slipping sideways; and every bit of the work was done with a neatness and exactness that the most skilled of carpenters might envy. Jerry and Julius may have thought that their sledge was the best ever made, but there are fully a score of men in Okak who can build a sledge without a fault, as perfect as a sledge can be.

The runners were shod with strips of iron, a style that has quite ousted the old plan of shoeing with bone or mud. I have seen a few Eskimo sledges with bone runners; the people say that they serve better in the soft snow of the springtime; but mud I have never seen, and probably my Okak neighbours have forgotten how to use it. The Killinek people still fancy it; they mix clay and moss with water in a pot, and plaster it on hot. It freezes instantly, and must then be scrubbed to smoothness. It is cheap, and that is the only advantage it has over iron; it is so brittle that every collision with a jagged rock knocks a bit off, and for this reason the travelling man from the Killinek neighbourhood carries a pot for mud-boiling among the load on his sledge, and is ready to halt at any time on the road and do a job of plastering.

Jerry and Julius screwed the irons on to the runners, and sand-papered them till they shone; and then, exactly four days after the fetching of the tree, they dragged the sledge up to the door of the hospital, and left it standing on the snow. "We dare not take it indoors," they said, "because it would warp."

I admired that handsome new sledge of mine, and thought to have a memento of it: I called to the crowd of men who had followed it to the door, and asked them, "Which of you can make me a little toy sledge, the likeness of that one?" They looked at one another, and said "Atsuk" (I don't know); but a bustling little fellow asked again what the question was, and then came forward saying "Uvanga, immakka" (I can, probably). I explained what I wanted, and he nodded and lit his pipe to help him

to think. "This big sledge of mine is sixteen feet long," I said; "make me a sledge just as many inches long, and two and a half inches broad instead of feet, then it will be adsingoamarik (the very image)."

I found him a little box, and he went off to start his work. Presently he came back. "Tukkekangilak," he said.

"What is the matter, Efraim?"

"It is not like an Eskimo sledge."

"If you make it sixteen inches by two and a half, and three-quarters of an inch high, it will be exactly like."

"Atsuk," said Efraim. However, I persuaded him to finish the little sledge, and it stands as an ornament in my room to this day; but Efraim was not satisfied. "To your eyes it may look all right," he said, "but to the eyes of the People it is all wrong. It is too long and narrow"—and that was the end of the matter. But I know that it is an exact model of my Eskimo travelling sledge, made carefully to scale by Efraim's nimble fingers; and only the Eskimo sense of proportion is odd!

It was in the bitterest of the winter cold that I made my first sledge journey. By this time the people had invented a name for me; they said my own name, "Tukkekangilak," had no meaning—which very possibly may be true, though their real reason was that they dislike a name that ends in a consonant, unless it be a "t" or a "k." I heard various references to "Atta" and "Hoddo," which were, I suppose, my own name Eskimo-ised; but before long these dropped out and I became Aniasiorte, the Pain Hunter. And so, during the last days of January, the word went round that Aniasiorte

was going to Hebron, and that Jerry and Julius were to be the drivers. A goodly number of the people made up their minds to go too, and thus it came about that I headed a procession of fourteen sledges. At the outset I knew nothing about it, for we started in pitchy darkness at five o'clock in the morning. Julius called it a fine morning, but as far as I was concerned it might have been midnight. I could see nothing but some black and shadowy shapes moving to and fro in the dim glimmer of a hurricane lamp, and if it had not been for the spice of new excitement I could have wished myself back among the blankets. I was well padded with woollens and sealskins, but the night air nipped my nose a little, and I was glad to keep rubbing it with my sealskin glove.

Julius, like the experienced driver he is, went through the list of travelling necessaries to make sure that he had got them all aboard, and then told me that he was ready to start.

Immediately hands were thrust towards me from all parts of the darkness, and I realised that a huge crowd of people had silently collected to watch us off, and to shake our hands and say "Aksunai." "Aksuse," I shouted; "taimak (ready), Julius"; and at the word Jerry sprinted along the track, and the dogs went racing after him. The line tightened with a jerk, and the sledge started with a bound that nearly threw me off. Some good friend seized the hurricane lantern, and ran along with it to show the way among the boulders, but he had to be nimble to keep out of the way of the boisterous dogs. Sledge dogs, unless they are very tired, are always eager to be on the move; and ours were in

such a hurry that they tried to take short cuts of their own, leaping over great snowdrifts and frantically straining to climb huge hummocks of ice, and we might easily have lost some of them, or at least have had some broken harness, if it had not been for the willing help of our army of spectators. That dash between the hummocks to the sea ice was like a nightmare: the flickering lantern, darting hither and thither; the dim shapes of men and boys rushing about, chasing the unruly dogs; the yelping and shouting, with the pad-pad of footsteps and the grind of the runners—the whole scene comes back to me as I write. And all the while the people were sticking to the sledge like flies, sitting, standing, kneeling, clinging, getting a ride somehow, all in a great good humour, and dropping off one by one when we reached the sea ice.

So I got my first send-off.

We were fairly on the way; and Julius struck a match and lit his pipe. In the flicker I got a glimpse of his face, all glittering with frost; his stubby beard was decorated with icicles, and his eyebrows were crusted with frozen snow; and when I passed a hand over my own face, I found that I was in the same plight. Julius was on the watch: he leaned over to me and said, "Did you wash your face this morning?"

"No," said I, "the missionary told me not."

"Good," said Julius, "now your face will not freeze."

I shivered to think what would have happened to my face if I had washed it: as it was, my cheeks and chin ached with the cold, and I could not help raising a furtive hand from time to time, just to make sure that I was not yet frozen.

By seven o'clock the sky was beginning to lighten, and we made our first halt at the famous ten-mile point Parkavik ("the meeting-place"). There the men disentangled the dogs, which by continual crossing over had plaited their traces together like the strings of a maypole; and I thought it well to drink some hot coffee. The coffee was not hot, although it was in a stone jar wrapped in a dogskin, but it was drinkable, which is more than I can say for it a few hours later, when it had assumed the form of ice-cream—not particularly tempting under the circumstances. The drivers did not want any: they had taken a good draught of water and a lump of frozen seal meat before starting, in addition to the breakfast of bread and meat and weak tea that I had given them, so they were content to wait a while. During their tedious unravelling of the knotted harness the other sledges began to come up, and soon the whole fourteen were assembled at Parkavik. We waited until all were ready, for the very simple reason that if we had started no exertions could have kept the other teams still, and so it came about that the starting again was by way of being an imposing spectacle. My sledge, with the drivers swelling with pride, headed the procession along the frozen fiord, and the others followed at proper intervals.

Not the least interesting part of this unique sight was the shadow: the sun was just up, and there was a marvellous string of spider-legged dogs and top-heavy sledges and weird, thin men sharply outlined on the pink snow. Travelling was rather more pleasant in the sunshine; the air felt warmer, in spite of the forty-three degrees of frost by my Fahrenheit

thermometer, and I was able to take some notice of the doings of the drivers. There was a full half mile of our procession, and all the drivers seemed to be shouting all the time. It is a habit with them; they feel that the dogs must be told constantly what they are to do; and a driver's work consists very largely of an unending repetition of the orders to the dogs. "Ouk-ouk-ouk" (go to the right) they say, or "Ra-ra-ra-ra-ra" (to the left); and if it is neither right nor left it is a continual "Huit-huit-huit" (go straight on). The leading dog has a good deal of responsibility on its shoulders; Geshe, my leader, had a trace about forty feet long, and needed to be on the alert to pick out her driver's voice at that distance. When I shouted to her she looked over her shoulder in a surprised sort of way, as if to say "Julius is in charge of this team: what are you shouting for?" but when Julius murmured a quiet "Ouk," away she curved to the right with the whole team wheeling after her, until his cry of "Huit" checked her. Some of the men were less favoured than we: I saw one of them shortening his leader's trace, and deposing the dog by this means from its proud position, while the poor brute whined and yelped and whistled as if it were having a flogging; and not a few of the drivers were shouting themselves hoarse because their leaders were stupid or disobedient or sulky.

Towards noon a man ahead of us shouted "Ah" at the top of his voice, and every driver took up the cry. All the dogs stopped and lay down with one accord, and all the drivers were busily heaving their sledges on to one side. It was time to ice the runners! It was a typical Eskimo idea, to do it all together, but there was sense in it. It would have been practically

impossible for one sledge to stop while the others went on, for the simple reason that the dogs will not do it; besides, the Eskimo is a companionable soul, and likes to have all these little things done in company.

My drivers fished a sealskin bag from under the doubled-up bearskin on which they had been sitting, and after exchanging a few words Jerry went off to disentangle the dogs again, while Julius made ready to do the icing. He sucked a mouthful of the lukewarm water in the bag and squirted it over the iron shoe of each runner, running quickly along as he did it and rubbing it smooth with the back of his leather glove. The water turned to ice instantaneously at the touch of the cold iron, but the men were taking no risks—every sledge was turned so that the runners were on the shady side, another instance of the natural resourcefulness of the Eskimo. Most of the men had brought jars or bags of water with them, and the few who had not came to borrow from us because we had the best supply. The borrower had a very simple method of carrying the water: he just filled his mouth and ran back to his own sledge, perhaps a hundred yards or more.

Our sledge caravan got rather scattered as the day wore on; in fact, with some of the men who had only a few dogs it resolved itself into an earnest race to do the sixty miles in the one day. My drivers took no notice of their hurry. "Let them go," they said, "we are all right, we shall get there."

Just in front of us there was a curious erection in the shape of a house on runners, a sort of square tent, somewhere about the size of a Punch and Judy show only not so tall, built on a sledge. This contained

the driver's wife, and his idea was that she should sit tight and not feel the cold. The idea was, no doubt, an excellent one; but it had the disadvantage of boxing the lady up in the dark and depriving her of all view of the outside world, and consequently she was unable to take care of herself properly. We came to a boulder-strewn beach, all ice covered, one of those places where the dogs try to go fast and are constantly getting their traces caught round points of ice. Off went the dogs with a rush, and the man after them to keep them straight. The sledge had nobody to guide it; it ran up the side of a great hummock and over it turned. My view of the proceedings from twenty yards behind was of a sledge upsetting and a heavily-padded and very surprised-looking Eskimo matron being somersaulted out of the top of her canvas house. She sat on the hard snow, gazing ruefully at her sledge as it bumped along at a good ten miles an hour; but she managed to collect her wits sufficiently to pick herself up and make a flying leap on to my sledge as it passed her. A mile further on we came on her husband sitting on a lump of ice and puffing unconcernedly at his pipe, while his dogs enjoyed a rest after their scamper.

Hebron is admirably placed for a sensational arrival. The track turns sharply round a jutting point of land and then runs for a straight mile and a half over the frozen harbour to the Mission station; consequently the keen-eyed people saw us as soon as we came round the point, and a good many of the men and boys started over the ice at a run to meet us, while the rest of the population collected on the slope in front of the village to watch.

From our point of view it was a relief to see the



WALRUS TUSKS AND IVORY CARVINGS

Walrus tusks are very scarce, and consequently ivory-carving is almost a lost art among the Eskimos. The picture shows men, women, sledges, dogs, a kajak, seals, birds, and various small animals and tools made from walrus-ivory by the Okak Eskimos.



FOUND IN HEATHEN GRAVES

The heathen Eskimos always buried pots and tools with the dead. A large trough-shaped stone lamp and a square stone cooking-pot, a harpoon head, a fishhook, a shoulder-bone for scraping skins, and knives and arrows of flint. In the foreground are several toys found in a child's grave.

houses among the snow and rocks after our cold day's travelling; and to them it was the biggest excitement of the winter. You can imagine how they would shout when they first saw our sledge; the big team of dogs and the three men on the sledge would be enough to tell them at once that it was a European. Presently we got within sound of their shouting; "Kablunâk, Kablunâk," they yelled, and their outbursts came booming over the ice in the still evening air. "Amalo, amalo" (another) they roared, as each sledge came round the point; and by the time we reached them and looked back along the track the thirteenth sledge was just in sight, with its trotting little mannikin driver and its bunch of little black dots of dogs, and the excitement was at fever pitch. There had never been anything like this before. Such a procession! It was a sight to remember; a long, dull streak across the clean, bright snow, alive with a series of crawling dots, the nearest easily distinguishable as men and dogs, shouting and yelping and racing towards us, the furthest mere black specks almost seeming to stand still. There was no mistake about the welcome; each sledge as it came up the slope was pounced upon by a laughing, gesticulating mob, who whisked it off, dogs and all, towards one or other of the Eskimo houses.

It is their way of inviting; seize the guest and take him along; and the boys ran in front of the dogs crying "Hau-hau-hau," and leading them on until at the sound of "Ah" they drew up at the proper door.

As for myself, I was shaking hands with a bearded, frosted man, the Hebron missionary; and a score of willing helpers were carrying my luggage

into the house and rushing back for more, and helping to loosen the dogs, and fold up the harness, and clear the snow away from the runners, and store everything away snug and safe for the night.

Hebron was a veritable land of dogs. Our procession had brought about a hundred and forty to add to the already large supply, and in consequence the place swarmed with them. By daytime it was not so bad; I could at all events see my way and avoid treading on the sleeping brutes, though it was not very comfortable to be persistently followed by a dozen or more of the wolfish-looking creatures; but by night it was awful. The dogs sang and snarled and fought and held meetings of their own, and prowled about in gangs in the moonlight, furtive and terrible. I do not suppose the Eskimos noticed the extra noise, or, for the matter of that, the extra number of doggy slumberers around their doors; but I feel pretty certain that the feeding was a matter of concern to them. Sledge dogs are ravenously hungry when feeding-time comes, and an ordinary team can easily polish off the carcase of a seal at one meal; so that, though feeding-time comes only three or four times a week, our band of Okak dogs must have made a big hole in the Hebron stock of seals. Some of the people visited Okak later in the winter; a sort of complimentary return call, I suppose it was, though it smacked very much of getting their own back.

About noon on the day after my arrival at Hebron the fourteenth sledge appeared. The owner had been hauling firewood all day on the day before we left Okak, and had started the trip with tired dogs. He paid for his folly by having to camp at

"Half Way House," a tumble-down hut thirty miles from anywhere, without fire and with nothing but a few scraps of dried fish for food. His poor dogs had to go hungry: but they were workers, and came trotting up the slope to Hebron in a most business-like way. With them came Shergo.

Shergo was a remarkable character among dogs. In the litter of plump black and white pups that arrived in the late autumn, mothered by my beautiful leading dog Geshê, there was a strange-looking little yellow creature which we named Shergo (meaning "by-and-by"). To which of her doggy ancestors she harked back, I cannot say; but she was an oddity, an utter freak. As soon as she could toddle she began to wander. Any team that appeared to be starting on a journey would do for Shergo, and so she made a good many futile trips to and fro with the wood sledges. Once she thought the water sledge looked promising, and went with that; but came back looking sad and wise and disappointed—only three miles to run, and a cold and shivery waiting for the tank to be filled, and then the three miles home again.

Shergo was not content to follow behind: no, if she choose to go with a team she took her place among them, and trotted with a grotesque air of determination, as if half the weight were on her bony little shoulders. I was not surprised when I saw her come trotting into Hebron with the fourteenth sledge. She had attached herself to that because it was the slowest, and the easiest for her short legs. I tried to befriend her, and hustled her off to where my own dogs were waiting for their food; but she preferred to take care of herself, and was generally

present at all the feedings in the village, snatching a precarious bone at each and fleeing with it to a solitary place. I got quite fond of Shergo, with a pitying sort of fondness, but she remained entirely unresponsive. For a whole day she was missing, and I knew in my inmost mind that she had gone with a sledge that had left at daybreak for the north. Right enough, she came home late at night, limping painfully among a sledge team that she had met on the hills. "Take that miserable little thing back to Hebron" is the translation of what Shergo heard on the Saeglek mountain pass, thirty miles north of Hebron, and she was ignominiously handed over and tied on the southward-bound sledge, and only allowed to trot the last few miles because she was nearly frozen. When I set out for Okak at the end of my four days' stay I sat on the sledge gripping Shergo in my arms; and she whined and yelped to be allowed to go northward. Home was the word, however, and Shergo at last submitted. Out of sight of Hebron I dropped her overboard, and she galloped forward to find a vacancy among the big dogs that were pulling. She ran with them all day, lagging sadly in the smooth places where the pace was fast, but leading triumphantly up the hills where the collar work had to be done, all the time pretending to her queer little self that she was working. We reached Okak in eleven hours and a half, with Shergo trotting wearily in the van.

She was home again—where she did not seem to want to be! She moped, and followed the wood sledges, but found no satisfaction; and a few days later her odd career was over, for I found her stiff and dead on the frozen sea beach.

CHAPTER X

AN URGENT CALL—ALONG THE ICE-EDGE—OUR GUIDE—
A COMIC TOUCH—STARTING HOME—OVER THE LAND

I HAD imagined Labrador to be an ideally healthy land, a sort of extra-Arctic Switzerland, and I was disappointed to find that it did not quite come up to my expectations. Europeans of sound constitution enjoy good health, if one overlooks such trifles as teeth coming loose as a result of too much tinned food, and a touch of influenza when that miserable complaint is in season. Influenza time comes twice a year, in midwinter (February) and midsummer (August); and the Eskimos knuckle under with one accord. When an epidemic begins it seldom misses any of them; they all fall ill to some extent, be it mild or severe, and so one learns to view the onset of an infectious sickness with apprehension.

Happily, only a few of the actual fevers have been known in Labrador, for if there were an outbreak of anything really fatal among the Eskimos it would mow them down as a scythe mows grass.

It was a sudden and very real feeling of alarm that made the Hebron missionary hurry over to Okak with the message, "Come, my people are dying!"

It was ten o'clock at night when he arrived, a black night with a cloudy sky and a moaning wind from the east; and when I heard the rushing of feet

and the hum of voices outside, and the hammer, hammer, hammer on the bolted door, I knew that something serious was stirring. I made haste to open, and in came my visitor, a trim-built, active, bushy-bearded little man, the very man for Arctic life.

"Come in, come in," I said, and seized his hands.

"Come," he said, "come, my people are dying."

This was no time for argument; his earnestness was real; and I turned to the crowd that surrounded the sledge where it stood on the snow at the foot of the steps, and shouted, "Who will drive my sledge to Hebron?"

There was a roar of volunteers: "Uvanga, uvanga, uvanga" (I, I, I); and I tried to choose the two who shouted first, and called them into the house. We wasted very little time over discussing the situation; it was a case of urgency; there must be no delay. If we started at five in the morning, said the Eskimos, we could run the first ten miles in the dark, and have the gathering light of the sunrise to help us before we reached the first difficult pass. This seemed sensible advice. "We will do so," I told the men; "call us in good time so that we may be ready."

"So let it be," said the drivers, and they got up to go home, perfectly cheerful although they knew that there was no rest for them, but they must spend the short night in making ready for the run.

Suddenly there came a roar from the crowd outside. "Another sledge, another sledge," they yelled; and we heard their pattering feet trotting down the track to meet the new comers. My drivers were off like a shot, bounding down the steps to see what was going on; and with that we set to on our supper.

In the middle of the meal the drivers came in, this time with serious faces, "Ajornarmat" (it cannot be helped), they said; "the ice is broken. Two of the Hebron people have followed the missionary, and they say that there is a storm from the east, and the ice was breaking behind them. To travel is impossible." This was a blow; but we had a long talk over the matter, and decided at the least to go in the morning and have a look at things. Then we went to bed.

Five o'clock came all too soon: I was hardly warm among the blankets before thumps resounded on the door, and I crawled out of bed to find the drivers dressed in their sealskins, the dogs in harness, and the sledge standing ready for its load.

It was a bleak and dispiriting business, this pulling on of cold clothes and boots by the lamplight; but there was work ahead, and we were eager to be at it; and by the time I was dressed the sledge was ready, and a crowd of people were keeping the dogs from running away. I thought that the men deserved a good breakfast, so I called them into the house and set them to work upon a big pannikin of hot tinned mutton, with what looked like unlimited bread and butter and weak tea. In an incredibly short time I heard them going out, chuckling with satisfaction, and muttering "Thankie, thankie," and I found that they had left a clear board behind them. Probably if they had been travelling for themselves they would never have bothered about breakfast; a chunk of frozen seal-meat would have satisfied them; but here was a chance not to be had every day, and I think they worked all the better for it.

It was anything but a pleasant morning, if morning it could be called. It was pitchy black, with never a star and no glimmer of moonshine; and only the fact that the dogs could smell their way along the beaten track made it possible for us to start at all. Although the thermometer registered only twenty degrees of frost the cold was bitter in the extreme, for a raw air came moaning from the east, chilling us through our heavy sealskins and making our cheeks and noses ache. We were even deprived of the benefit of an occasional trot alongside the sledge, for we could only see the faintest glimmer of the snow on which we were running, and when I tried to warm my stiffening toes I kept tripping and stumbling over jagged points of ice until one of the men shouted "Sit still, or we shall be losing you."

After that I sat still, and hoped for the morning.

One gets to know what hope means at a time like that. For two solid hours the agony went on, and then a faint glimmer of grey began to show to the eastward: it changed to a dull red, sullen and lurid in the morning haze, and we began to see the wide stretch of white ice beside us, and the dogs with their spidery shadows, and a black and awful sea ahead of us.

Then we stopped our sledge, and clustered together to consult. I seem to see it now, that little knot of anxious men, with faces all frosted and features but dimly discernible in the half darkness, standing together on the frozen sea with the ice heaving and groaning under their feet, questioning and planning to find a road to Hebron; and my pulse quickens as I seem to hear again the quick pattering of dogs' feet in the gloom behind us, and to see the short, light

sledge with its active little driver, and to hear that cheery voice say "Aksuse." Johannes!

What was he doing? "Oh," said Johannes, "I heard you were going to Hebron, so I thought I would come with you. I hear they have plenty of walruses at Hebron, and I want some walrus skin for new drags for my sledge. I think they will sell me some." What a day to choose to go shopping! I wonder if there was more at the back of that little man's mind. He joined our little conference, and listened with nods to all that our drivers had to say. They were for turning back. "There is no road," they said, "the ice is all broken there around the headland across the bay. Let us turn homewards." "A-a-a-tsuk," said Johannes. "I know a track over the headland; let me see if we can get to it." He walked along the ice at the foot of the rocks, now standing for a moment, now running a few steps, now clinging to the stones, and we watched him in silence. I admired that little Eskimo; to my mind he seemed the very personification of dogged pluck; and as I stood shivering out there on the ice at the foot of the cliffs of lonely Labrador, and watching the tiny fur-clad figure as it moved steadily on to where the big headland of Uivak loomed black and stately, I said to myself. "There is a man; well may he call himself one of the People." He came back presently, and said "We can do it"—and we did it!

I think that of all my memories of life in Labrador the most vivid is the memory of that race along the fringe of ice at the foot of the cliffs. On the left the wall of rock rose steep; on the right the black water churned and tumbled and ground the floating pans of ice together: beneath us the thick sea-ice

rocked and heaved with the force of the waves, and here and there the water came swilling over. In front was a racing sledge, with Johannes sitting on it and yelling "Hu-it (go on), hu-it, hu-it" to his dogs; and our teams were following at safe intervals, galloping as fast as their feet would carry them. "Sit tight, sit tight," said the drivers; and there we sat, bowling along over the heaving ice. Sometimes one of the men pushed out a leg to guide the sledge round a bend or to check it where it seemed likely to slip sideways: they said nothing; just sat there and chewed at their pipes, and left the dogs to follow the voice that shouted unceasingly in front. At the place where the guide led us on to the headland the ice was broken away from the rock, and was rising and falling with the swell. One moment it came groaning up to the level of the land; the next it sank away and left a leap of several feet. The dogs went scrambling over, glad to get on to something firm; but the drivers held the sledge back until the ice began to rise, and then with a yell they started the dogs again and bumped across the crack just as it came up level. A second too soon or too late would have meant smashing the front of the sledge to splinters; and as we drew on to the land I looked back and saw the ice dipping again behind us, and my companion's dogs coming on to take their turn.

Johannes looked over his shoulder to see that we were safe, and then started on foot, ahead of his dogs, to show the track. It seemed a long way over the headland, uphill and down, and always through soft snow; and all the morning that little man trotted on, knee deep in snow, lifting his feet high to run the

more easily, and keeping the same steady pace, hour after hour, with the dogs hard at his heels. Sometimes he got on faster than the dogs, especially where the snow was deep and they had practically to swim because they could not get a foothold; and then Johannes would run from side to side with his head down, to make them believe he was looking for something, or he would pretend to scatter something on the snow; and every time they saw him playing this truly Eskimo game of make-believe they craned their necks forward and whined and struggled in their eagerness to catch him up.

When lunch-time came I had a laugh at my companion's plight. We sat side by side upon my sledge to make the meal more sociable; and I think we both contemplated with relish the bread and meat that was thawing in our warmest pockets, for the excitement of the trip had sent the hours slipping by faster than we had thought, and hunger soon nips in that cold air. But my bearded friend was frost-bound; he could not open his mouth, because the moisture of his breath had frozen his beard and moustache firmly together. We carefully thawed him with our hands, and so he managed to get a bite; but the coffee froze him up again, and I am afraid that I laughed a good deal at his predicament as he cautiously poked thin chips of biscuit between his teeth, with the sledge rolling and jolting so that he missed as often as he hit. But he had the laugh on his side before long.

I was dilating upon the advantages of having a travelling box to sit in, while he was in favour of balancing on the top of the load like the Eskimos. "If you have a travelling box," said I, "you can

drop all your loose belongings in without fear of losing them, and you have no need to cling on constantly; you can loll in comfort and"—but my words were cut short by a lurch of the sledge as it passed over a buried boulder, and off I rolled into the soft snow, where I remained sticking head downwards, with futile legs waving in the air. The drivers of the last sledge pulled me out and set me right way up; and there I sat, scraping the freezing snow out of my neck and ears and hair, while everybody laughed.

Early in the afternoon we lurched down a steep place on to the sea-ice, and saw a clear, firm road in front of us.

Johannes came to my sledge for a talk, and told me marvellous tales of the land over which we had crossed. "Nellojut nunangat" (that is the land of the heathen), he said; "there is a big village of iglos up there, all tumbling to pieces, and you can find flint harpoons and broken stone pots among the rubbish buried in the floors. No man has lived there for a long time"—"ovatsiaro-pârârluk" (a far-away by-and-by) was his picturesque way of putting it—"and the people do not often travel that way. They are a little frightened, for it is strange and lonely among the tumble-down huts, and there is a big heathen graveyard on the headland, where they used to lay the dead hunters down in their stone graves in sight of the sea. But I have been there, tautuk (I should like to go again); why, that steep place that we came down is a river in the summer, and the trout are so many in it that you can catch them with your hands in the pool under the waterfall." But Johannes's story came to an end, for

his dogs were squabbling, and off he ran to terrify them with his shouts.

As the afternoon wore on the dogs began to tire, and Johannes trotted in front again; and the rest of us sat on our sledges until the cold began to chill us, and then ran alongside until weariness made us sit down again. So, cold and weary by turns, and at last cold and weary at the same time, we drew near to Hebron; and every time I looked ahead in the gathering twilight, and afterwards in the bright moonshine, I saw a trim little figure clad in silvery sealskins trotting tirelessly on, and a pack of patient draggle-tailed dogs struggling gamely to keep at his heels. So we came to Hebron in the dark of the night, seventy-one miles over sea-ice and snow-covered hills, and of the seventy-one miles Johannes had trotted at least forty. Like ghosts in the moonlight we drew up the slope towards the sleeping village, with no sound but the grinding of the runners, and the quick panting of the dogs and the patter-patter of their feet.

The Hebron dogs smelt strangers; they woke from their frosty beds in the snow porches, and ran out to whine and yelp; and the village awoke with a start. Lights flashed everywhere, and with a furore of excitement the people turned out of their reindeer-skin beds, and came helter-skelter out of doors, pulling on clothes as they ran, and shouting the word that they always use to betoken the coming of a sledge—"Kemmutsit, kemmutsi-i-it." "Nakomêk, nakomêk," they shouted as they wrung our hands, "Aksuse." They clustered round their own missionary with evident affection; "Aksunai," they said, "nakudlarpotit" (we are thankful to you); then

in their practical way they shouldered our rugs and boxes and led the way to the Mission house.

I need not say much about the two days I spent in Hebron. The people were in a state of great excitement, ready to fall in with any plan, for typhus fever had broken out in two of the huts, and four of the victims were already dead.

I got the sick ones isolated, the infected huts destroyed, and the clothes and bedding sunk into the sea through a hole in the ice, and the pestilence spread no further.

It meant the outlay of a little money on helping those so summarily rendered homeless to set up housekeeping afresh; but I shall always think that the money was well spent—and I was surprised to find how little it costs to make an Eskimo home.

As soon as it was safe to go I started home, and this time my sledge was the only one, for Johannes was still busy buying walrus hide. We set off at daybreak on a fine bright morning, with the whole population lined up to see us off or to run the first half mile with us. My drivers sat grinning on the sledge and let the Hebron men do the guiding; and if many hands make light work that sledge must have slid easily, for there were more hands to heave it from side to side among the stones and to steady it down the sudden dips than could find room for a grip. A horde of boys ran in front of the dogs, shouting and chattering and chasing one another; and the women and older folks on the bank behind us yelled "Aksuse, aksuse" as long as we could hear them. A good send-off is half the journey; and I could see by the smiles on the drivers' faces, as they



AN INTERESTING EVENT

The start of a sledge journey; leaving Hebron in the early morning. The dogs are in their places waiting for the word to go, and the spectators have turned their attention to the sledge, where the author is the centre of an interested group.

complacently puffed at their pipes, that they felt the elation as much as I did myself.

Our helpers dropped off one by one, and with a last wave of the hand we turned out of the bay and left Hebron hidden behind the rocks.

For nine hours we jogged on in the usual style of an Eskimo sledge journey: that is to say, the drivers shared the tasks as drivers do, one looking after the dogs while the other guided the sledge, and sometimes changing places for a little variety; the dogs played their usual trick of getting all tangled up, and compelling us to stop every ten miles to disentangle them; and I trotted and sat still by turns, flicking the long whip-lash to and fro, and listening to the chatter of the men as they talked of the landmarks we were passing. We only saw one sign of life the whole day long, and that was when we met a boy with a sledge and six dogs twenty miles out of Hebron. He was taking home a load of firewood, and had come all that way because there are no trees so far north as Hebron itself. He did not stop, but just wheeled his dogs out of the way so as to keep the two teams from getting tangled, and shouted "Aksunai" as he passed. I suppose he had spent the night in the woods.

Late in the afternoon we reached the frozen river down which we had come from our crossing of the headland, and the men became eager and excited. In front of us was a smooth sheet of dark grey ice, covering what had been black water when we passed it a couple of days before. We halted at the lumpy joining of new ice and old, and the men went cautiously forward to try it. They walked twenty or thirty yards, and then stopped and

beckoned me to follow. It was with a little natural trepidation that I set my foot upon the pasty-looking surface; but I was not so heavy as the Eskimos, and judged that what bore them would be safe for me too. "Kannoêlungitok, immakka" (it is probably all right) were the first words they said when I joined them on the queer elastic ice, and one of them stamped his foot and set the whole field shuddering. It rocked and swayed as we walked to and fro, and I wondered how the heavy sledge would fare round the steep face of the headland. "Is it safe for the sledge?" I asked them. "Immakka" (probably—it may be), was their answer. "Are we to travel over the ice or over the land," said I; "what do you think." "Issumangnik" (just as you please) said the drivers; and that was as much as I could get them to say. To my mind they seemed none too sure about it, and I felt that there was nothing to be gained by taking a needless risk. "Over the land," I said, and with a nod of agreement and never a word the men turned cheerfully to help the sledge up the steep wall. The dogs clawed and slipped and whined as they struggled up the frozen brook, and the drivers hauled and heaved at the groaning sledge, while I clung to it in a hopeless effort to keep my feet. The little flexible feet of the Eskimos, with their tight-fitting and supple sealskin boots, seemed to grasp the waves and roughnesses in the slippery fresh-water ice, and up the two willing fellows clambered, shoving the nose of the sledge this way and that to give it the best road. We found our tracks of two days before in the soft snow on the land, and the dogs put their noses down and went whimpering along, distressed because they

could go no faster. It was not till we had raced down the slope to the ice again, and were round the bay that we had skirted in so hazardous a fashion under Johannes's guidance, that my drivers stopped the dogs and turned to look once more at Cape Uivak, where he rose stiffly from the wide plain of new ice. "Kannoêlungitok, immakka," said one to the other; and then, turning to me with a smile, "If we had not had you with us we should have crossed the new ice. It is probably all right—for Eskimos."

They had been quite content to face five hours' hard work over the headland instead of five miles' clear fast run round its foot: risks to them were nothing—they knew the ice—but they would not even *seem* to take me into danger.

And they called to the dogs and drove on, homewards.

CHAPTER XI

A Providential Check—Soft Snow—Sledge Dogs.

MY next journey to Hebron contained one of those adventurous touches that all Labrador travellers know. The winter weather is always treacherous, and however carefully one may study the barometer, and however wise and experienced the drivers may be, storms may arise and snow may fall at the shortest notice.

We made our start at five o'clock on a calm, cold morning, with a cloudless sky above us all twinkling with stars. It seemed an ideal travelling morning; the dogs were brisk and in the best condition, and the track was as good as a winter track can be. We had every prospect of making a fast run, and when the sun rose I had my first taste of the real pleasures of travel.

There was an exhilaration about the keen, frosty air and the crackling snow, and I thoroughly enjoyed the alternate running for warmth and resting on the sledge in the cold sunshine.

In less than six hours we reached the neck of land that stands half way between Okak and Hebron, and climbed the steep slope at a pace that took my breath away. The drivers seemed quite at their ease; as a matter of fact, Eskimos are so used to running and climbing that they never seem to pant or lose their wind however hard they are pushed. Running is part of their nature.

We stopped on the summit to clear the dogs for the run down the steep slope that leads to the Hebron ice, and as we looked before us we saw a cloud drifting quickly from the north, and lying low upon the wide bay. One driver looked at the other: they shook their heads. "Ajornarmat" (it cannot be helped), they said.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"See that cloud: that is attuarnek" (the northern storm).

We held a brief discussion of the situation, and made up our minds to run for shelter. "Jannekunut" (to John's house), said the men, and they shouted the dogs on to their legs again and we went whizzing down the hill. And all the time there was running in my mind the phrase out of the Bible, "A little cloud, no greater than a man's hand." At first sight that little cloud would not have frightened me, but the drivers knew it; and when I looked again after the exciting race down to the ice, I saw a heavy grey wall coming tearing along to meet us. In a few minutes it was upon us, and there had begun one of the most anxious hours that I have ever spent. I sat with my back to the wind, for I dared not face it, and even through my thick sealskin the wind cut bitterly. Each time I turned to look I saw the same sight; a wall of frozen snow beating against us, a taut line stretching away to where the dogs were lost to sight in the drift, and two plump, fur-clad, and frosted figures, clinging to the sledge and running with heads down, guiding the sledge with an instinct that did not fail them even in the awful "attuarnek" which swallowed us up and blotted out the landmarks, and drowned every sound in its

terrific roar. How the men found their way I do not know, but suddenly we went bumping up a bank and left the storm behind us. In another minute we heard the howling of dogs, and when the sledge went grinding over a patch of wood-chippings I knew that a house must be near. Sure enough the dogs stopped on the sheltered side of a wooden house nearly buried in snow, and one of the men shouted to me "Go in—John's house." I thumped the thick of the snow off my shoulders and made for the porch, which was, of course, full of dogs; but when I "shooed" them out of the way I was astonished to find that they were all in their harness. I pulled the seal-hide thong that lifted the latch, and went into the house. There sat John, clad in all his travelling furs, with a dejected head bowed upon his hands. He looked up in an apathetic sort of way, but his look changed in an instant to one of utter consternation. Then he jumped to his feet and shouted for his daughter, and the two of them stared, and wrung my hand, and asked how ever I had managed to get there. My side of the story was soon told, and then came John's: one of his household had just met with an accident, and he had harnessed his team to go to Hebron, the nearest Mission station, for help, when the storm came up and drove him indoors. Between us we managed to set things to rights, and all the evening John sat ruminating over the strange happenings of the day; and he put my own thoughts into words when he said, "The Hand of God is very near us on the Labrador." It is only a travelling incident, but I could not help thinking of his words as we toiled

through the soft snow to Hebron on the following morning.

On the way home from Hebron, a few days later, we had to cross Nappartok Bay, a place with an unenviable reputation. No sledge driver will take upon himself to guarantee a fast run if he has Nappartok Bay to cross, for there the snow is always soft; and there, on my way home from Hebron, I had my first taste of the real quality of a soft track. As soon as we left the land, the dogs began to wallow in the clinging snow, and the sledge nearly came to a stop. The poor brutes seemed to be actually swimming, unable to reach the bottom of the snow and get a foothold, and floundering as they tried to lift their legs above the surface for another step. By a sort of instinct they dropped into line one behind the other, so that each dog had the advantage of the trampled track of the ones before it. I felt most sorry for the leading dog, as she went shuffling and whining along with nose down and tail up, but Jerry slipped on his snowshoes and tramped ahead of her to give her some sort of a road to follow. It was a curious sight: the trudging little Eskimo, with his feet wide apart, swinging the big rackets round and planting them one in front of the other, and behind him the dogs, marching in a narrow furrow, and looking like a long line of waving tails.

Sometimes the snow was too deep for them; they looked round and whined, as if to say "Do you really mean us to go on? Why not camp until it is better?" but Julius said "Hu-it," and on they went, trying their hardest and whistling with distress.

In one place even Julius's "Hu-it," repeated over and over again, failed to move them, though they

struggled and tugged, and though the men heaved the sledge from side to side to set the runners free from the clinging snow; they simply wallowed, and I wondered what was going to be the outcome. The men were equal to the emergency; no doubt it was an everyday kind of occurrence to them; they went on snowshoes for twenty or thirty yards, and tramped to and fro to harden a track, and then came back and urged the dogs to try again, and so the sledge crawled on. I slipped on my snowshoes and tried to go with them, but after a mile or two I was absolutely beaten; my legs refused to be lifted, and once I fell and had to be ignominiously rescued from a sea of powdery snow by the ever-watchful Julius. It seemed a shame to sit upon the sledge while the dogs were toiling so hard, but there was nothing else for it; so I sat still and tried not to think about the poor dogs, though really, when I saw the sledge sinking above the cross-pieces, with its nose shoving a great snowball in front of it, I had not the heart to sit down. I jumped off, and immediately sank and made the dogs' work all the harder by clinging to the side of the travelling box and nearly upsetting the whole thing. In the softest places, when the big snowball grew between the runners in front, the men came back and kicked it away, and lifted the nose of the sledge up for a fresh plunge, and yelled "Hu-it, hu-it, hu-it" until the dogs went off with a scamper—a burst of energy that only lasted for ten yards, when the nose was under the snow again and needed all the efforts of both men and dogs to make it plough forward ever so slowly. It is not more than ten miles across Nappartok Bay, but we took ten and a half hours to cross it; and after that crossing I no longer

wondered why the old missionaries used the word "mauja" (soft snow), in their translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, to picture to Eskimo minds the plight of the pilgrim when he got into the Slough of Despond. What better word could they have used for the clinging, sinking waste in which the traveller's feet sank as he made his weary way towards the wicket gate? What word more vivid than "mauja" to a people who spend their lives among the snow and ice and rocks of the frozen Labrador?

It is surprising to find how soon the dogs forget the "mauja." Once through it they are quite willing to trot along at their usual five miles an hour, and even after their ten and a half hours of labouring across Nappartok Bay they were able to run the thirty miles to Okak in good time—and without any whipping. Eskimo drivers do not believe in flogging tired dogs: it only takes the spirit out of them, they say, and though I have seen lazy dogs and sulky dogs and disobedient and quarrelsome dogs I felt glad that the men did not treat them cruelly: a dog's life is hard enough without that. The first thing was always to shout at the dog—"Tawny" or "Glove" or "Lamp" or whatever its name happened to be; and it was amusing to see how the dog that heard its name tightened up its trace and tried to efface itself by crossing over to another place in the team. If it was only a matter of laziness a word was enough, but when there was a doggy quarrel afoot the reminder was soon forgotten and great hulking "Lamp" would soon be back in his place, snapping at his neighbour's heels. Then one driver would say to the other "Una-ârluk" (that awful creature), and without further ado he reached

for the whip and ran alongside the sledge trailing the lash on the snow.

The dogs looked over their shoulders and yelped, and hurried and strained to get along as fast as possible, while the prospective victim made wild efforts to hide himself among the others.

It was useless: with an indescribable sweep of the arm the driver sent the thirty feet of walrus-hide lash hissing through the air, and with a sharp flick caught the right dog a sounding crack on its flank. There was a yell, and the poor dog drooped its tail and cowered on the snow, crawling along with a shrill whistling noise in anticipation of another smack. Once was enough! But there are hard-headed villains among dogs, that will not take the well-meant hint of a single crack of the whip; for them there is a special flogging in store. The driver runs forward and grasps the offender's trace, and hauls it nearer to the sledge. And so the dog must run, only a couple of yards or so from the man with the whip, and the very terror which the hauling back inspires is a sufficiently wholesome lesson for most dogs. Ten minutes of running on a shortened trace generally works a cure, but if this broadest of hints seems useless three or four sound strokes of the lash will send the poor dog back to his senses with a jerk, and when, at the end of the whipping, his trace is unhitched and he is allowed to trot forward to his place, he is a marvellous worker for an hour or two—trace always tight, shoulders always forward, with none of that shambling, make-believe, slack-trace work that lazy dogs are apt to do. In the best of teams there are always one or two dogs running slack, and the drivers let it pass so long as the dogs

take turns at it, because it gives the team the chance of resting by turns from the weight of the pulling. A dog that must work all the time soon wears out, and it always seemed better to me and my drivers to take fifteen or seventeen dogs for a long trip and maintain a good pace easily, than to force a team of ten or eleven to do the work, as some of the Eskimos do.

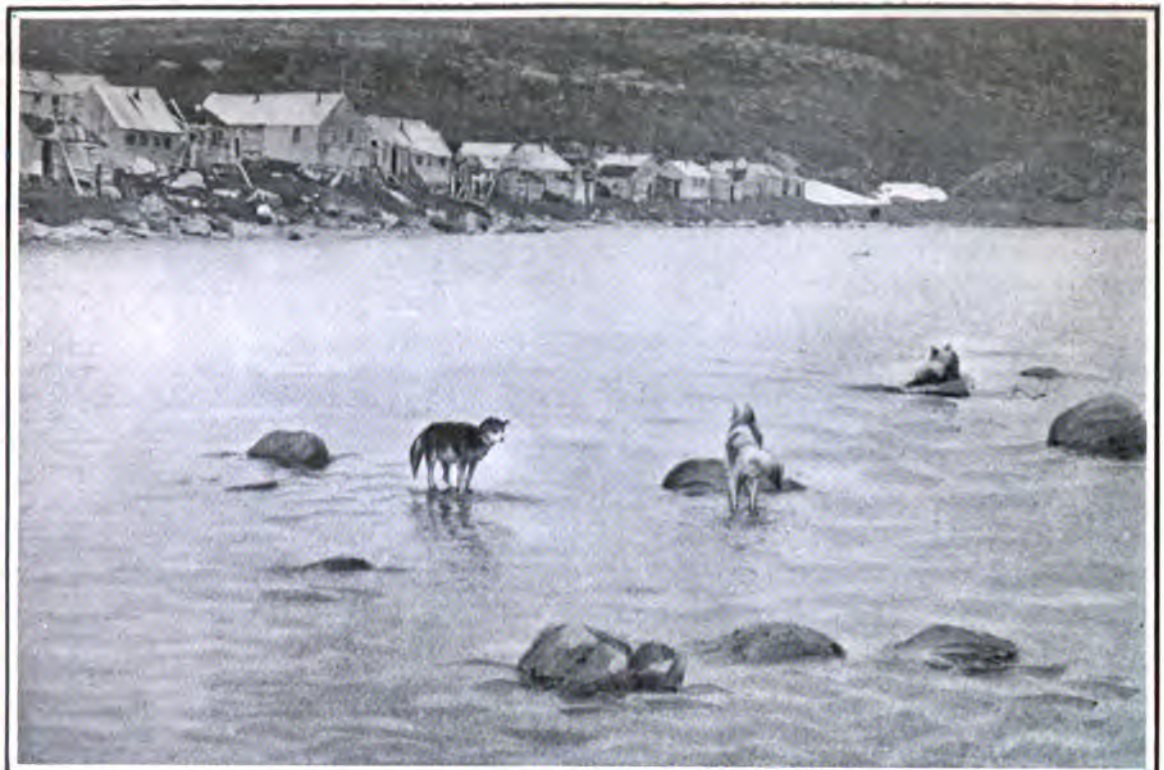
Good dogs do not need the whip to make them trot, and my drivers were generally content to shout at them or to flick the lash to and fro as a reminder. When the dogs were tired one or the other of the men used to run in front of them. Often the men must have been as tired as the dogs themselves, but no matter; with the utmost cheerfulness big heavy Julius would take off his sealskin dicky and tuck it under the lashings of the sledge, and run ahead as if he were a mere boy instead of the staid father of a large family, and in a fair way to be a grandfather before so very long. When he had run enough for his purpose he would come back to the sledge for a smoke while the other man took up the running, and so between them they used to hurry the team over the last ten or fifteen miles of a day's trip in two or three hours, and sometimes land me at the snug warmth of a proper house instead of dooming me to an uncomfortable apology for rest in a snow hut—though the snow hut would have served them very well if they had been alone. It was an odd dance that brought the man back to the sledge from his place in front of the dogs: it would have been useless to try to get to one side and allow the dogs to go past, for the dogs follow the runner with an absolutely blind perseverance; accordingly, the only

thing to do was to stand still, and compel the dogs to run past by shouting at them. There was always the same little hesitation on the part of the dogs: the man stood, and they expected to stand too. No, "Hu-it, hu-it, hu-eeet," yelled the driver—perhaps he flicked the whip across the heads of the team—and the frightened dogs ran on, while the runner began to jump nimbly over the traces. He pranced up and down, always seeming just to save himself from falling, and sat down with a jerk as the sledge overtook him.

Once I tried this characteristically Eskimo trick, and nearly paid dearly for my rashness. I had been running ahead of the dogs, and stopped with a shout of "Hu-it" which the drivers took up. In a moment I was among the tangle of traces, and found that it takes skill to jump them successfully. I hopped and skipped with all my energies, but I had not the knack of the thing, and down I went with my feet caught in a jumble of seal-hide thongs.

The dogs were on me with a pounce, and the next moments were a blurred impression of snarling, fighting dogs and shouting, kicking drivers. A whip cracked, and the dogs spread in terror, while the men tried to calm them with deep-toned "Ah's"; and after that I always carried the whip with me when I wanted to run ahead.

Dogs begin to get very ravenous when they have run thirty or forty miles, and are ready to eat things less palatable than human beings. Once, I remember my fur cap blew off, and that was the last I saw of it. There happened to be a sledge following close behind us, and the dogs stopped to have a merry little scuffle over the dry morsel that a chance wind



DOGS FISHING

In winter the sledge dogs are fed three or four times a week, but in summer, on the principle of "no work, no food," they are left to forage for themselves. They may often be seen in the shallow water on the beach catching the slow sculpins or frog-fish.

had blown in their way. It was all over in a moment, and probably one of them had swallowed my cap whole, so quickly was it demolished.

One of my drivers, good thoughtful fellow, insisted on lending me his cap in spite of my protests. "Me all right," he grinned. "Eskimo brains, no freeze, plenty of hair; you, Kablunâk brains, freeze very quick"; and perhaps he was talking sense, for the Eskimos very seldom wear caps except for travelling; they walk about on the bitterest, snowiest days with their heads uncovered except for the thick thatching of coal-black hair.

One thing that we saw on nearly every journey, and that always set the dogs off at a gallop, was the Arctic raven. That seems a solitary bird, for we nearly always saw one only. The great black bird used to stand on the snow, cocking its head this way and that, and perhaps stalking a step or two in an unutterably grave manner; and the dogs, as soon as they caught sight of it, were off with futile haste, each striving its utmost to get there first, and all held in fixed order by their traces. The leading dog had the best chance, but the raven had a wary old eye upon the danger: it waited until the dogs were within a few feet of it, and from the sledge it looked as if it were caught, and then with leisurely flappings betook itself off to a fresh stand, to wait with unruffled calm for a repetition of the same performance.

I have no doubt that the raven would have been demolished, bones, feathers, and all, at a single gulp, if it had waited another second; but it never waited. I never saw a driver shoot at a raven, though they must be tempted at times, for I have known ravens' wings to be used for cleaning out the stove-pipes.

There seems to be no limit to a dog's appetite, especially if it be a hungry travelling dog. During one stay at Nain a man came to me with a very rueful countenance to ask whether I had any spare harness with me. He had followed my sledge from Okak, and wanted to get back again if only he could be assisted out of the plight in which his dogs had landed him. It appeared that the harness was all wet when he reached Nain, so he hung it over the roof of the hut in which he was lodging, expecting it to dry in the wind. In the morning it was all gone—in more senses than one, not a trace remained—and his dogs were slinking about the village with a furtive air and a very well-fed appearance. He seemed hurt by this ungrateful behaviour. "And I fed them, too," he said; "I gave them half a seal for their supper." It was only the wolfish nature of the dogs that made them devour the harness, and not hunger merely, for I am sure that the man did feed them as he said. In fact, I have never known an Eskimo go in to his own food and rest after a day's travelling, without first unharnessing and feeding his dogs. It is a custom of the people.

Sometimes the dogs have to work on very poor food, especially in the springtime, when the reindeer hunt is over and the seals have not yet come. Then the dogs have to help in the spring cleaning, if I may use such an expression; at any rate, when all the people have got new reindeer skins for beds it seems quite the thing to chop the old bed-skins up for dog-food, and the dogs gulp this queer fodder down merrily enough if it is moistened with a little rank oil. Two or three meal-times a week is enough for the sledge dogs; the Eskimos say that

over-feeding makes them savage. They are unpleasant brutes, handsome in their way, but unfriendly and sly; easily mastered by firmness, but ready to take advantage of any weakness. I have known an Eskimo child to be killed by the dogs, because she met a pack of them when she was alone; and a poor woman who fell in a fit was pounced upon and half devoured before help could arrive.

I was always wary of the dogs, and was very glad of those tough seal-hide knee-boots to protect my legs when I stumbled among the sleeping brutes that filled the porches of the huts. My plan was to poke them to wide-awakeness with a stick, and then, with a shout of "Hu-it" (a very expressive sort of "Get out of the way") march boldly through them. One evening a man came to my room and said, "Shall I shoot my dog?"

"Why?"

"Because it bit your boot; and the people have a rule that a dog which has bitten must be killed."

As the dog had only tasted boot, with which flavour it must have been well acquainted, I spared it; but if it had tasted me, nothing short of shooting it would have satisfied the owner.

It is a custom of the people: the dangerous dog must die.

Kristian was rather relieved when I acquitted his dog. I had trodden on its tail in a dark porch, and its snap at my boot was by way of a natural response to stimulation. I explained all this to Kristian. "Let the dog live," I said.

Kristian gravely said, "Taimak (so let it be): it is my best dog."

CHAPTER XII

MY DRIVERS—TWO JONATHANS—MY BOX—OLD KOLLER GETS CAUGHT—A SNOW HOUSE—A WOLF—A NINETY-MILE TROT—A PARTRIDGE ON THE ROAD—MY FROZEN NOSE

AFTER a little experience of Eskimo sledge travelling, I decided that I should get on better if I chose two men as permanent drivers. So I appointed Julius and Johannes to the position.

Julius is a big, burly fellow, not more than five feet three or four inches tall, but with a magnificent pair of shoulders. He must weigh fourteen or fifteen stone, and can lift almost anything. To see him hoist my big sledge this way and that, a weight that I could hardly shift at all, was a constant delight to me. The big man did it so easily, and always with the same gentle smile on his broad face; he never bothered to clench his teeth and draw deep breaths, he simply lifted things as if they were nothing. "Yes," said I, "that is the man for me." So Julius became head driver. It was a wise choice: there was never any trouble while he was in charge, and the sledge never upset or ran away as sledges sometimes do.

Johannes is a sort of pocket edition of Julius. He has the same delightfully happy smile, whatever there is to do, and the same willing energy; but the man himself is small and slim, and active as an eel. Each of these men possesses an Eskimo surname, and the names just happen to fit them.

Julius is called Kakârsuk, which means "a little mountain"; and Julius's weight was a matter of concern to the dogs. When he sat down on the sledge they all used to look round to see what the matter was, and Johannes would laugh and say, "No wonder they are surprised: they have to pull a mountain now." Julius used to grin at this pleasantry, and then say with a chuckle, "Yes, they don't mind when you jump on, for it is only like sticking a pin into the sledge"; Johannes's name is Merkorârsuk, which means "a little needle." This was an endless joke on our journeys. If the dogs were running slowly, it was "Get off, old mountain, they can't pull you"; and if Johannes happened to feel inclined to trot alongside a little, Julius would say with a chuckle, "Your weight doesn't make any difference, little pin." After these passages they both used to ruminate over the joke, storing it up as something good to tell when they got home.

My drivers soon became firm friends. They even got as far as calling one another Jonathan. "Just tighten that dog's trace, Jonata." "All right, Jonata." "Run in front a little way, Jonata." "Ahaila (yes), Jonata," and so on. When we were making our camp in the woods, Julius sometimes came to me and said, "Where's Jonata?"

"Over among those trees, I think; he went to look for water."

Off he would go, to look for Johannes. Meanwhile Johannes might have wandered round and reached camp from some other quarter. His first question invariably was, "Where's Jonata?"

One night, when we were snugly fixed in our

snow hut, I asked them, "Why do you call each other Jonata?"

Julius took a few good puffs at his pipe and answered "Illanârêngnermut" (because of friendship).

"Then why not call yourselves David and Jonathan?" said I; "one be David and the other be Jonathan?"

"No," said he, "Jonathan was the friend"; and Johannes nodded in approval. I said no more; and Jonathan they both remained as long as I knew them.

"Friends"—yes, and my friends, too.

Let me put in a good word for my Eskimo drivers.

I have travelled hundreds of miles with those two men, uphill and down, over mountain passes and across the rugged surface of the frozen sea; I have camped in snow huts with them, forty miles from the nearest other human being; I have taken them from their homes and their hunting at the shortest notice; I have pushed them on when some emergency called though I knew they would rather rest; I have kept them back when they would gladly have made a start; through winter storms, and worse, through awful winter rains, we three have gone together; and never, a cross word, never a complaint, never a grumble, have I heard from them. Rough Eskimos, both, fond of raw meat and rancid oil, but capable of gentleness and affection and absolutely worthy of the trust I placed in them. It was not all pleasure for those two men. I have seen them cold and wet many a time; I have seen them risk their lives a time or two; but they loved those old journeys.

Little Johannes wrote to me a few months ago,



GESHÊ, AN ESKIMO SLEDGE DOG

The leading dog in the author's team. She runs on a trace about thirty-five feet long, and leads the team any way at a word from the driver. Sledge dogs are handsome but treacherous, and have been known to kill and eat helpless people and children.



MY DRIVERS

Johannes and Julius in their winter furs. Most travellers take two drivers, one to control the sledge, the other to drive the dogs, and to help one another in the difficult task of building a snow house for the night's shelter. All the Eskimos are marvellous pathfinders.

a queer letter scrawled in pencil on a big sheet of foolscap. The spelling is weird in places, because he puts things as they sound to his Eskimo ears. "Immale," he writes. "Oh that we were travelling again."

Julius was my head driver and looked after the sledge. Johannes looked after everything else. I cannot enumerate his duties; he was on the look-out for them all day long, and did them as they cropped up. Amongst other things he elected himself my "nurse." That is to say, he was always on the look-out to make himself useful in some little personal way. Suppose that one of my boot-strings came undone. "No, no," says Johannes, "uvangale —let me do it—keep your gloves on; you have English hands; they will freeze. I have Eskimo hands." And on the long, weary hours of the dark evenings, when the dogs toiled slowly on and the wind nipped painfully, little Johannes was always near, trotting from one side to the other, racing forward to disentangle an unlucky dog and coming back to ask "Are you cold? See that rock? Two hours to Nain. Ananâk (splendid), ai?"

On one of those runs through threatening weather I overheard a little conversation between the drivers. We were climbing a pass. The two men were walking beside the nose of the sledge, guiding it between the rocks, while I followed behind.

"It is heavy up here," said one; "I wish we could go faster."

"Ai-ai," said the other. "I wish the doctor's box could get off and walk."

"Unêt," was the answer; "that box is medicine for the sick folks; we are helping them."

Eskimo drivers always look askance at any unusual load. They expect to take food and sleeping-bags and a box of clothing; but to take a big box besides was something new. Hence their remarks.

I once made my drivers almost protest. We halted for a night at a trading station, and after a pleasant evening in the storekeeper's room the good man, our host, asked me to take on a small box for a friend of his at the next post.

"It is only a small box," he said, "and will not take up much room."

I assented willingly, and thought no more of it.

My drivers looked at me rather reproachfully in the morning when the small box was brought out. It was "only a small box," but it was a box of gun cartridges, and weighed like lead. They did not say anything, but I can imagine their thoughts as the day wore on.

It was a pleasure to travel with the same two drivers because they got so entirely used to one another. They worked together like two parts of a machine.

There are plenty of thrills on a sledge journey, and coasting downhill is one of them. As soon as we began to descend, the drivers moved to the front of the sledge, and sat one on each side. Their main concern seemed to be to keep the sledge from running away. They dug their heels into the snow, and tugged and shoved to keep the track; and all the while they were yelling and screaming at the dogs, which raced on in front in a frightened effort to get out of the way.

As the pace grew faster the drivers put on the brakes.

OLD KOLLEK GETS CAUGHT

On my very first journey I had noticed two heavy loops of walrus hide, tucked under the lashings at the front of the sledge, and had wondered about them. I soon knew what they were. Looped over the front of the sledge runners they make powerful drags. One is enough to check the pace on any ordinary hill, while with two the sledge will stop on slopes that look quite alarming. It is only seldom that the drivers really let the sledge go, because they dare not risk a smash over an ice-hummock or a wave of frozen snow.

I have had breathless rushes on some of the beaten tracks, where the men shout the dogs to one side, or unfasten them and leave them to follow, and the sledge whizzes down in a whirl of powdery snow kicked up by the drivers' heels. There are very few hills smooth enough for this kind of work. For the most part the winter passes follow the beds of mountain streams, where jagged rocks and awkward turns abound. But if the pace is not often thrilling, the ride is crammed with adventure; and many a time as I clung to the sledge, bumping and heaving down the slope, have I marvelled at the skill of my drivers. The two men think like one, and the sledge simply obeys them.

Julius, being the stronger man, has the lion's share of the actual guiding; Johannes is always ready to run forward to the dogs. "Kollek, Kollek," he would shout, "keep to the track: keep to the track, you rascal. Ra-ra-ra-ra, go round that rock!" Kollek was a foolish dog; his place was the outside one in the team, and there he would be! He did not seem to like running with the others; and not all the shouting in the world would bring him into line

if he had made up his doggy mind to straggle. And round that rock he would not go. Perhaps he was in a brown study: perhaps he was sulky: straight on he went, outside dog right enough, but the wrong side of the rock. Now came the trouble. Away rushed Johannes to lift the trace over; but before he could reach it Kollek was whining and whistling with terror as the weight of the sledge drew it tight and dragged him backwards. Poor dog! he planted his feet as firmly as he could on the frozen snow, and did his best to withstand the strain; but the sledge went calmly on, and Kollek slithered frantically backwards. In a twinkling he was plump up against the rock, and then he could go no further.

There was a twang as of a giant fiddle-string when the trace broke, and Kollek was free. The trace trailed limply behind, while the dog scurried away to his place in the team.

There he trotted, with shoulders forward and nose down, looking as if he were pulling as hard as the best dog in the country, but sly old rascal, looking back every now and again to see if Johannes was after him with the whip.

I never saw my drivers do much work with the whip. They always had one with them, but used it mostly for turning the team. Eskimo dogs are often disobedient; they sometimes take absolutely no notice of the orders which the drivers shout at them; and when our dogs behaved like that Johannas would give them a gentle hint by lashing the whip over the snow. That brought them to their senses! For a few minutes they would have obeyed a whisper.

Another great advantage which I gaine by taking the same two drivers on all my journeys, was that I never needed to be anxious about a night's shelter. "What will you do if we cannot reach home?" I asked Johannes one afternoon, as we laboured through the drifting snow in the teeth of an Arctic storm.

"Stop and build a snow house," said he.

"Will you be able to find good snow in this weather?"

"Sua (what)?" said Johannes, with a look of surprise. "Find good snow? I can always find good snow."

Johannes has plenty of faith in himself—and I have never known him fail. He was not bragging; he made a matter-of-fact statement, like the thorough Eskimo he is. He succeeds because it is his nature, and because he always keeps his eyes open.

Some people are not so happy in their drivers. One good man set out to travel with two inexperienced young Eskimos. When the time came to build the snow house, they made the alarming discovery that the snow knives had dropped off the sledge somewhere on the road, and—"Ajornarmat" (it cannot be helped) said the Eskimos. The traveller in that instance might have lost his life if he had not been an unusually careful man. He had a little tent among his travelling paraphernalia. He had often been teased for "making the dogs drag a tent around after them," and he confessed that he did not think he would ever use it. But it saved his life. As it was, he found it too cold for sleep, and spent a miserable night shivering in his sealskin sleeping-bag.

The Eskimo drivers snored peacefully on the snow floor!

One plucky little Yorkshireman had an even worse experience. He had snow knives, but his drivers could not find snow hard enough for building. They dug trenches in the snow, and slept in the open! Providentially there was no wind, but my thermometer outside the hospital at Okak, only thirty miles north, registered sixty degrees of frost; so that one man at least can boast of sleeping in the open air at somewhere near that temperature, and taking no harm. As a rule this sort of experience is beyond the endurance of a European constitution.

Johannes was very distressed about it. "Kappianarmêk" (how awful), he said; "my namesake sleeps in the open air! I will go with him when he travels back to Hopedale, and then he will be sure of a snow house!"

On those journeys of mine I got quite used to seeing Johannes work himself up to snow house pitch. When the afternoon light began to grow dull, he pulled out one of the big snow knives that he kept under the lashings of the sledge. A fearsome-looking knife it was, with a bone handle and a blade a yard long. Brandishing this, he trotted from side to side, prodding here and jabbing there. He was "finding snow."

Soon Julius stopped the sledge, and they held a consultation.

Then the building began. It was generally on a gently sloping hillside, for there the snow hardens the best; and Julius told me that a number of places are famous among the Eskimos for good hard building

snow, and travellers do their best to reach one of these spots for their camping.

When once the place was chosen, my drivers were soon at work. Each man armed himself with his huge snow knife, and between them they marked a circle on the snow. Then Johannes retired to the middle and began to dig. He first made a wedge-shaped hole to give himself a start; and then from the sides of the hole he carved great slabs of the frozen snow. I judged them to be about six or eight inches thick, two or three feet long, and eighteen inches high, and they were nearly as heavy as stone. Johannes just tumbled them out of his hole as fast as he could cut them, and as the hole grew I saw that the slabs were all slightly curved. Julius seized each slab as it toppled out, and carried it gingerly to the edge of the circle. He set the slabs on edge, side by side, and chipped them a little from the top so that they leaned inwards. He pared away the first few with his knife so that the lowest ring, when finished, formed the beginning of a spiral. He followed the spiral up, propping each slab against its neighbour, and chipping its edge so that it leaned well inward. Meanwhile Johannes got nearer and nearer the wall with his digging, and his work got harder and harder, for instead of tumbling the slabs out he had to pick them up and hand them to Julius over the leaning wall. I thought the wall looked frail and unsafe, but Julius seemed to think otherwise, for I have often seen him crawl upon it and lean over to see how Johannes was getting on inside. As a matter of fact, his weight only pressed the slabs together a bit more firmly; and I got so used to it that I have sat placidly in a snow house while he crawled over the top.

At last the spiral was finished, all but the "keystone." Julius sprawled on the side of the house, while Johannes's hands shoved a big slab through the opening that still remained at the top. Julius laid it over the hole, and chipped the edges away with his knife until it gently dropped into place, and the building was ready. A scraping and trampling noise inside was the next thing; that was Johannes smoothing the floor. Meanwhile Julius was filling all the crevices with handfuls of snow. "Keep the wind out," he said, "boy's work, this"; from which I gathered that the Eskimo boy learns to build by filling the crevices with snow as his father fits the slabs together. "Yes," said Julius, "and boy has to follow quick, too; if he gets behind, he's no good. Soon learn quick. Now my boy—" and Julius was off into an anecdote of *his* boy's quickness.

Soon Johannes was ready to come out. I always knew when, because he used to light his pipe; and a weird and rather pretty sight it was, to see the glow through the snow walls, with all the joints and crevices marked out because the snow was softer there and let the light through. It was generally dark by the time the house was ready. Johannes's sword poked out suddenly, and slashed a doorway in the wall, and the man himself crawled out and made straight for the sledge.

Then the dogs began to sit up. They knew that feeding-time was near. They were usually quiet while the building was in progress, but the finish of the work seemed to wake them up. They began to whine and prowl about, and Julius often had to show them the whip to keep them in order. They would



JULIUS AND A SNOW HOUSE

The Eskimo always builds his snow hut on a spiral plan, making the wall lean well inwards as it curves upwards, and fits a "keystone" of frozen snow into the hole at the top. When finished it is snug and windproof, though always very cold.

collect into a bunch and sit on their haunches, wistfully eyeing the preparations for their supper, and uttering a queer whistling sound. Julius needed only to trail the whip lash behind him as he walked, and the dogs nearest to it would slink off to the other side of the group. Meanwhile Johannes was chopping a frozen seal into fragments. He spread the pieces on the snow, and called "Taimak" (ready).

There was a pricking of ears and a lolling of tongues: Julius quietly moved to one side, and with a mighty pounce the dogs were on top of their food. Yelping, snapping, snarling, gulping, the wise ones bolted the frozen meat, bones and all, as fast as they could pick it up. Some showed a little more refinement, but the dog that picked up a chunk and wandered aside to eat it at leisure got only a poor share. It was evident that the only way to get enough was to be quick; and it was marvellous how soon that frozen seal was demolished. It was the work of a few seconds. One of the drivers always stood by to see fair play, while the other carried the load off the sledge and piled it inside the snow house.

I was generally cook on these occasions, and by the time the dogs were fed my kettle was boiling over a fire made in a hole in the snow, and I was trying to thaw some bread.

The men did not mind their bread and meat frozen: "ko-ak," they called it, and said it was "ananâk" (splendid); but my teeth would not tackle it. I used to make blocks of toast, and stuff them in my pockets, and even then they were usually frozen in the middle. However, though it was rather different from dining at a high-class hotel, we

got our evening meal, with hunger as sauce; and we were glad to lie down and rest.

The drivers used to "make the beds" by spreading all the harness on the floor, and covering it with a bearskin. Then across the middle of the house they laid my sleeping-bag, and I crawled in. Last of all they made a little hole at the top of the house for ventilation, and blocked up the door, and we were ready for sleep. I was never cold in a snow house, for a threefold bag like mine, sealskin, reindeer skin, and blanket, was as snug as the warmest of beds: but, oh, the floor! Dogs' harness may be all very well as a bed; the Eskimos used to lie on it without any extra covering, and snore the snores of the just; but I rolled from side to side, vainly trying to find a soft spot, and feeling, I suppose, very much as the poor princess did in the fairy story, when she had to sleep with a pea under the mattress.

On one of these wakeful nights I heard a terrible scuffling among the dogs outside. There were constant snarlings and howls, mixed with a most weird trampling noise.

At last the turmoil came too near for my peace of mind: scraping, shuffling feet padded over the snow house, bringing down showers of snow on to my face. I got rather alarmed.

I woke Johannes—and he took some waking, too.

He rubbed his eyes, and then as the noise dawned on his ears, "Kingmiârluit" (those awful dogs), he said, and shoved his way through the door. There was a sharp yelp and a brisk scuttering, and then silence again. Johannes crawled back, and plastered up the doorway with handfuls of snow.

"A wolf among the dogs," he laconically told me; "too much fight, all the time. Fine night: start soon," and he tumbled into his slumbers again.

It was well that those two men could sleep, for the work they could cram into a day's travelling astonished me.

I once travelled from Nain to Okak, a distance of ninety miles, with Julius alone. The snow was hard, and the dogs in good trim, but the sky looked threatening. "No stop," said Julius, and he drove through the ninety miles without a rest. We stopped four or five times to disentangle the dogs' traces, but never for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time; and we ate our bread and meat as we ran. I took my turn with the driving, but Julius bore the brunt of the work. He chirruped and whistled and cooed to the dogs as night began to come on, and they began to whine for a rest; he ran in front of them when they began to flag, and landed me in Okak inside of twenty-two hours. He was as fresh as paint the next day, and went off on a hunting expedition of his own.

My drivers did not seem to think it hard work; it was all part of their life; it came naturally to them.

They used to enjoy the little incidents that came to vary the wearisome plodding through the snow. One day we were crossing the Kiglapeits, labouring through a ravine where the snow lay deep and soft, when Julius suddenly said "A-ah."

The dogs lay down very willingly, and I wondered why the stoppage. Julius held up his hand for silence, and I saw that Johannes was loading a gun. I could see no cause for this mysterious

business, but I did not want to spoil sport by speaking: so I contented myself by wishing that I had Eskimo eyes for the time being. Johannes handed the gun to Julius. He raised it to his shoulder and fired.

Then I saw a fluttering in the snow, not five yards away: a little red stain broke out, and something red and white rolled down the bank towards us. Julius's hand was up for silence again, and the gun went to his shoulder.

Another bang, another stain, another something rolling.

Then I saw two partridges, white as the snow on which they were walking. They looked from side to side in a dazed manner; walked a few steps, and then took wing and flew leisurely over the bank out of sight. Perhaps they had never seen a man before, or a dog, for that matter; and probably our dogs were too hard at work to notice them; and so the sledge was close beside them before we knew it.

Julius picked up the two he had shot, and tucked them under the bearskin at the front of the sledge. "We shall have a fine supper to-night," he said; and then, with a great roar of "Hu-it" to the dogs, he drove on.

Once it was the tracks of reindeer that crossed our path. We stopped, and the drivers had a consultation.

"Hu-it," they said, and on went the dogs. Johannes looked wistfully at the reindeer tracks as we left them. "Twelve hours old," he said, "gone a long way now. No good," and he filled his stumpy pipe to solace him.

MY FROZEN NOSE

Johannes was a man of resource. I used to enjoy watching him find water. He seemed to know exactly where every stream ought to be, for he never hesitated. He took a snow knife, and plunged it into the snow up to the hilt. Then he drew it out swiftly, and looked at the blade. It was wet! He had found water, and soon had dug a hole and was ladling out mugfuls for everybody's benefit. He did not always strike water at the first plunge, but never seemed to need more than two or three.

I had an example of his resourcefulness when my nose froze. It was a cold, dull day, and we were running against the wind. Suddenly Johannes stooped and gathered a handful of snow. He plumped down beside me on the sledge, seized me round the neck, and rubbed my nose vigorously with his snowball. I remember that I spluttered considerably, and Julius looked round with a grin. Johannes's face was all solicitude. "Your nose is frozen," he said, "your nose is frozen;" and he rubbed and rubbed until he was satisfied that the life had come back into it—and so Johannes saved my nose.

CHAPTER XIII

A Run to Nain—A Camping Accident—A Summons Home—Singing us Off—Into the Storm—Lost on the Mountain—On the Edge of a Precipice—Julius to the Rescue—An Uncomfortable Night.

I SUPPOSE that all Eskimo drivers are much of a muchness, and the reason why I found my two men such excellent fellows was that we got so used to one another. But I have never seen so good a path-finder as little Johannes, and I could not help thinking of him a time or two on one of the very few journeys I made without him. Johannes could not come; his wife was ill, and it seemed unreasonable to ask him to leave her. I think that big Julius was as much concerned as I, for when I told him to choose a new companion for the trip to Nain he hummed and hawed, and took more than a day to make a choice. Finally he came along leading his cousin Kristian, a big, burly young man, and told me that this was "aipara" (my other one). This was Kristian's first trip as driver to a European, and he evidently felt flattered; at any rate, he worked like a Trojan in spite of his reputation for laziness, and his gift for managing dogs was truly marvellous. In our snow house on the mountain pass Kristian became reminiscent. That is one of the strangest of tacks for an Eskimo to take, but I suppose the unaccustomed luxury of half frozen tinned mutton and three parts frozen bread, washed down with tea

which was boiling at the beginning of the meal and scummed with ice before the end, was sufficient to jog Kristian's memory of the last long sledge trip that he had made. He was a boy at the time, and was doing the boy's work of filling the crevices in the snow house wall after the builder, while his father, old Abia of Okak, kept the dogs in order by flicking the whip to and fro. Kristian struck his knife in the snow house wall, and just at that moment Abia lashed out at a quarrelsome dog. The lash, as it came twirling back for the stroke, wrapped itself round the knife and hurled it straight at Abia. He thought that the whip had struck him, and took no more notice until a queer faintness and the sight of blood trickling over his boot made him put his hand to his back—and find the knife. The man in the snow house heard his cries, and came running to see what was wrong. Kristian had forgotten the name of that man, but he must have been a cool customer, for he set about a piece of marvellous emergency surgery. He cut a thread of hide from the harness of one of the dogs, and, using a spike of bone for a needle, he sewed up the wound and stopped the bleeding. Abia got over both the injury and the rough surgery, for I knew him as an old man of seventy-seven, a great age for an Eskimo.

I had only been a few days in Nain when a solitary Eskimo arrived from Okak with a note from my wife, whom I had left in charge of the hospital. "A boy has been brought in with a compound fracture. If you can come at once you may save his leg." The messenger was almost worn out: he had hurried on night and day, as Eskimos do

when a life is at stake, and his poor little team of seven dogs sprawled upon the snow, as weary as he. I called Julius. "We must start home at once," I told him. "No good," said he, "we have just fed the dogs." I knew what that meant: sledge dogs get a meal every two days, and gorge themselves so that they can hardly move. "But we must go: borrow dogs, leave the sleepiest behind: we must go." Julius went off without a word. Presently Kristian came. "Are we going to start? Look, bad storm coming," and he pointed towards the north. "Never mind, Kristian, we must go." "Ahaila," said Kristian, and went to help Julius harness the dogs.

News soon spreads, and the whole village turned out to see the start. As I walked down to take my place on the sledge the old Eskimo schoolmaster laid his hand on my sleeve. "Don't go," he said, "you will all be lost. Don't go."

His concern was real, so I called my drivers. "What do you say?" I asked them. "Are you willing to go?"

"Illâle" (of course), they said. "Ready," said I, "go ahead." The dogs slowly raised themselves on their legs, and whined as they trotted along the bumpy path towards the sea-ice; and the heavy wrack of the northern storm came bowling along to meet us. "Aksuse," shouted the people, "be strong," and we waved our hands and shouted back. Then they began to sing.

There is a lump in my throat and a mist in my eyes even now, when I think of that scene: just a crowd of rough Eskimos, people whose grandfathers had been heathen and wild, singing a hymn

of God-speed as we set out on our dangerous errand.

"Takkotigêlârminiptingnut
Gûde illagilisetôk"

they sang, and the charmingly balanced harmony came fainter and ever fainter as the wind began to sigh about us and the snow to beat on our faces. "God be with you till we meet again"—and we settled confidently to our task.

That was the quietest day I have ever spent on a dog-sledge. There was none of the chatter and banter to which we were used; there was work for us all to do, and we did it seriously, and all the time the drivers chewed pensively at their battered tobacco pipes and said nothing.

It was slow going until the dogs had got over their feed, but towards evening the pace improved and we made our usual six or seven miles an hour in spite of the storm. As often as the dogs got tangled up Julius straightened their traces without stopping the sledge. I had heard tell of this feat, and so was very much interested when he set about it; but I thought it a very risky piece of acrobatic work. He pulled the team back close to the sledge, so as to get the frozen knot in the hauling line within reach of his teeth. The dogs, of course, thought they were going to be thrashed, and tugged and galloped most frantically, so that the man had hard work to hold them.

We should have been in a pretty plight if they had got away, for they would have turned in their tracks and gone back to Nain, and we should have been left to walk. However, Julius tied the line

to one leg, and chewed the knot loose; then he slipped the traces off one by one and looped them over his other leg, so that all through the performance it was a case of seventeen dogs harnessed to Julius's legs, while he sat tight and made the sledge come along with him. My heart was in my mouth until the risky business was over. All day long I sat on the sledge with my back to the wind, and wondered how the drivers were finding the way. It was evening before I got any inkling of our whereabouts, and then the way led us uphill, and I knew that we had left the sea-ice and were on the land. There followed a cold and dreary hour of bumping and jolting over rocks and up sudden little cliffs, while the men were constantly out of sight in the storm: then Kristian's voice said "A-ah, ah," and the dogs stopped. "Stopped" is hardly expressive enough: at the word their legs seemed to collapse under them, and they curled themselves up where they dropped.

I confess to a feeling of loneliness as I stood beside the sledge, with the snow driving silently past and nothing to see at all but the dim outlines of the dogs as they curled round and went to sleep. The occasional moan of the wind made things worse: the drivers had vanished into the gloom, and I seemed to be alone on the mountain. But a ghostly form loomed up, and big Julius, like the thoughtful fellow he is, had a word of encouragement to say. "We shall build a snow house here."

"Do you know where we are?" I asked him.

"On the proper sledge-track over Kiglapeit, of course," he said; and his tone sounded rather surprised, as if it were a preposterous idea that we



THE TIRED DOGS

At the end of a day's run the dogs are so tired that they simply lie down and sleep where they are, hardly waking when the driver drags the harness off their shoulders. They rest in the open air, whatever the weather, and in the morning they are quite fresh and eager for the work.

could possibly be off the track. The snow swallowed him up again, but somehow I felt less chilly for his words.

Happily we had stopped close to a straggling bush, so I was able to cut some twigs for a fire without any risk of losing myself. I lit my fire in a niche of the rock, and put on a kettleful of snow, and then stamped up and down to get a little warmth into me. On my way to the snow house I trod on what looked like a mound of snow in the river bed. The mound got up and yelped, and I saw that I was among the dogs. They were peacefully blanketed by the snow, content to remain buried until the drivers woke them up in the morning. Of supper they had no thought, for they had not got over their breakfast by any means. The one I had trodden on settled down again as soon as he found that the disturbance was neither the signal for work nor the beginning of a fight, and in a few moments he was, to all intents and purposes, a snow-covered stone as before. I picked my way carefully among the others, mindful of my precious kettle, and struggled through the low doorway into the snow house. That particular snow house was the smallest I have ever had, for the men had no time to waste over comfort; shelter was all we wanted. They gave me the longest diameter, but I had to draw my knees up to lie down at all, and the uncomfortable cramped attitude would have been enough to drive sleep away even if I had not suffered the added annoyance of a sleeping-bag partly filled with snow. Imagine taking off your sodden boots, and poking your stockinged feet into what ought to be the snug warmth of a thick, blanket-lined sealskin bag, only to meet an icy mass

of snow! Ugh! I crawled down head first and scraped the most of it out; but the bag was damp and clammy, and it took me half the night to thaw it to a comfortable warmth. A pint mug of hot tea is a wonderful help at a time like that, even if the water is smoky and clouded with grits; and we used to fold our hands and "say grace" for those rough meals with real thankfulness. But oh! for an Eskimo constitution for sledge travelling. After this tea-supper of ours Julius and Kristian lay down to rest. They had no sleeping-bags; they spread the dogs' harness under them so as not to be actually on the snow, and pillowed their heads on their arms. They had to bend their bodies to fit the curve of the wall, but before many minutes had passed I heard great snores from each side of me. I must have dozed towards morning, for I suddenly felt somebody shaking me and poking a mug of tea into my hand. The men had left me to sleep while they harnessed the dogs and made the breakfast, and I blessed the kindness that spared me the usual long shivery time of waiting.

The weather was worse than ever, but the men were quite cheerful about it, although they must have known that we had a thoroughly dangerous task in front of us. To-day we must cross the summit of the Kiglapeit mountains, with a blinding snowstorm beating in our faces. But the Eskimos were in their element, and at times like these they seem unable to be faint-hearted.

Off we went into the storm, and the sledge-runners groaned as they ploughed heavily through the soft snow. For ten or twelve miles the going was plain; our track followed the course of a frozen torrent,

between high banks, and the dogs had no difficulty in picking their way; but when we got on to the lake at the top of the pass the trouble began. The wind was blowing in a circle, and gave us no guidance at all; and to me it seemed that we were on an open plain of snow, enclosed by whirling walls of white. I could see nothing but the snow slipping past us as the sledge drove steadily on. Julius sat with set face, continually crying "Hu-it, hu-it" (go straight on, go straight on) to the dogs, hoping by this means to hit the track again on the other side of the lake. An hour slipped by and still there was no land, so we stopped the sledge for a conference. "Ajornarmat" (it cannot be helped), said the drivers; "it is useless to look for landmarks, for we are still on the lake. We must just drive on and hope." We seemed to be travelling fast, for the dogs had got over their food of yesterday and were frisky and full of energy; but it was a very blindfold sort of work, and I think it was a relief to us all to feel the grind of rock under the runners, and to have the sensation of going uphill again. We were across the lake, though where, and how far from our course, we could not tell. The nose of the sledge pointed up and up, and then suddenly dipped: we were over the ridge on the summit of the Kiglapeit mountains, and the men were slipping the heavy walrus-hide drags over the nose of each runner in readiness for the slide downhill. The sledge began to gather way, and I took a good grip of the lashings and braced myself to withstand the jolts, for to fall off meant certain disaster. Suddenly a cloud of powdery snow hissed up as the drags bit the road under the runners, and I was flung violently back-

wards against my travelling box. As I fell I had a glimpse of the drivers leaning heavily back, with heels dug into the snow, straining their utmost to stop the sledge. The whining, frightened dogs were all about us. Julius turned the sledge bodily upside down, to prevent the dogs from running away with it, and then, as I came forward to speak to him, he held up a warning hand. His laconic "Ajorkok" (it cannot be done) was enough; I knew that we had missed the channel that runs between the shoulders of the summit, and were on the very brink of a slope that runs steeper and ever steeper to end in a sheer precipice, down which we might have fallen headlong. There was a tight feeling in my throat as I drew back from the giddy depth of whirling snowflakes and joined the drivers where they stood by the sledge. It had been a narrow escape. "We must go back," said Julius. "No," said Kristian, "a little further to the left we can get safely down: it is too slow to go back." "Oukagle" (but no), said Julius. "Ahailale" (but yes), said Kristian; and it looked like the beginning of a quarrel. They appealed to me. "Go back," I said.

Kristian heaved the sledge round, and Julius trotted over the sledge crest again, calling "Ha, ha, ha" to the dogs. For a long time I saw no more of him, and more than once Kristian said, "We ought to have gone to the left; too slow, this." Even the dogs were out of sight; I could see the long trace slipping over the snow, with now and again a glimpse of the tangled, knotted mass of lines that led away to the dogs. The lines were always tight, and I knew by that that Julius was somewhere ahead, and the dogs were following him. Suddenly he appeared,

looking a real snow man. "Here is the track," he announced, and flung himself heavily on to the sledge and began to charge his pipe. Now the dogs ran yelping on, and the sledge raced after them down the slope. The drags were on, but the way was safe, for we had recognised the passage between two rocks which marked the beginning of the descent to the sea-ice, and we drove on with perfect confidence. We reached the ice late in the afternoon, and found the wind blowing straight from the north. This was a help, for it gave us our course across the bay; but the dogs refused to face it, and kept edging away to one side or the other, so that once more we had to rely on the willing Julius. On he trotted, right in the teeth of the wind, with the dogs scampering close on his heels. When for a while we skirted the land he came back to the sledge for a rest and a smoke, but in the open he dived into the storm again, and led the dogs on with tales of seals and foxes and a house to rest in. At last his words came true. "Iglo, iglo" (a house, a house), he yelled, and stood to let the dogs race by. As he jumped on to the sledge he said "A house; sleep here," and the sledge drew up with a bump and a rattle at the door of one of the craziest shacks that it has been my lot to see. The door was off its hinges, if it ever had any, and the doorway was choked with snow; but we dug our way in with hands and snow knives. There was a rusty iron stove without a pipe, but we filled it with damp twigs and lit it with a stump of candle, and sat in the horrible reek. We were warm, and we could dry our clothes, even if we were choked. At first it was too awful for me, and even the Eskimos grinned at it; but when we got the fire nice and hot, and

turned the back of the stove to the doorway, we got something better, and we hung our boots from the rafters and sat down to our toasted but rather frost-bitten bread and mutton with quite a feeling of luxury.

But oh, that night! The Eskimos thought we were in for a real treat; there was actually a platform bed of moss, as dry as we could wish; and we lay down upon it side by side. Soon I heard the usual snores, but I—well, I was in the hands or claws or jaws of creatures left by previous occupants of that bed. There are no fleas in Labrador, but there are things that bite as hard. I will not try to give their scientific name, for I never saw them: they just bit and fled. I will not prolong the memory of that night: suffice it to say that I was glad to see the morning. The storm had gone: we could see our landmarks, and the only disadvantage was soft snow knee deep, through which the dogs slowly wallowed. I was worn out. The end of our journey is prosaic enough, after the excitement of yesterday, but, be the fact prosaic or not, I knew that there was work waiting for me; so I got into my sleeping-bag, and the drivers laid me on the sledge and tucked me snugly in, and there I slept. I woke late in the afternoon to the shout of "Kemmutsit" (the sledge), and as I raised my head I saw the Okak people running out to welcome us home.

CHAPTER XIV

A Drowning Accident—A Breakdown on the Mountain—Johannes in a Storm—Crossing a Crevice

ODDLY enough, a drowning accident was the cause of my next sledge journey. The message came, as Labrador messages do, sudden and terse, carried by two stolid men post haste over the hills as soon as the ice was firm enough for them to travel. There had been a drowning accident in November, wrote the superintendent; would I go and teach the people life-saving drill? The messengers were besieged with anxious questions, and from their laconic answers I pieced together the story of the mishap. It appears that a strong storm was blowing, and some of the men home from the seal-hunt saw their big boat beginning to drag its anchor. Absorbed by the idea of saving their boat, four of them put off from the beach in a little flat-bottomed punt; and after a short battle with the waves over they went. Eskimos are no swimmers; they are more used to ice than water; and it is no wonder that the poor fellows made but a feeble fight against the stormy sea. One of them was floundering face downwards when a big wave caught him and cast him on a boulder, where he sprawled, gasping and half choked: the other three had never a chance, and their bodies were washed up on the beach half-an-hour later.

A plucky little Eskimo put out in a punt and managed to save the man on the boulder at the risk

of his life, managing somehow to keep the punt afloat and tow the drowning man into safety, and that is the end of the story. My drivers entered very heartily into the idea of another journey to Nain, and started my sledge on a raw February morning with characteristic determination and energy. But they were beaten for once: the snow fell thicker and thicker as we went along, and after doing ten miles they stopped and offered me my choice between camping and turning back. As for themselves, I know that they would certainly have camped; but, as usual, they left the decision to me, and I argued the question out for myself while they waited. They would have felt just as much at home in a snow hut as anywhere else, and frozen food would have suited them perfectly; but the European constitution finds it a terrible trial to live in a freezing atmosphere without warmth of any sort, and I knew very well that my teeth and digestion would both fail if I gave them nothing but blocks of frozen meat and slabs of stone-hard bread to work upon, so I chose to go back. So it comes about that I cannot give a vivid description of weary days and nights spent shivering in a little snow bee-hive with the storm whirling noisily outside, but instead I can look back with thankfulness, and record how I was spared that most awful of Labrador experiences. Others that I know have had it to endure—quiet, lion-hearted missionaries, or brave, hardy settler men—and they point to a limp, or a frosted hand or foot, as a memento of the time.

"Go back," I said.

Julius swung the sledge round with never a word, and Johannes straightened the harness and

shouted the bedraggled dogs into movement again. He sat by me on the sledge, and thumped my shoulders to shake off the snow, and shouted in my ear "Going back is best for you: you would only freeze out here."

After that the two drivers sat like solid men of snow, and only came to life when their pipes wanted filling or when the dogs threatened to stop. The sledge toiled slowly on, creaking and groaning through the soft new snow, and the dogs seemed to be finding the way for themselves. I was mystified until Johannes told me that we were on the wood track. "Dogs come this far every day," he shouted; "they know the road." It was a wearisome kind of travelling, with nothing to be seen but a whirl of snowflakes, and nothing to vary the monotony: the drivers sat still and puffed, and I sat still and shivered.

After we had crossed the last neck of land before Okak Bay, we ran into fine weather, and no doubt the village was rather surprised to see us back so soon. The people came running over the ice to meet us, fearing that something had gone wrong, and shouting in alarm; but the first sight of the three of us all heaped with snow must have been enough to tell them what things were like behind the hill, and no doubt the drivers had plenty to say over the pipes during the evening.

Three days later we made another start, when the storm had blown itself out, and found very little of the snowfall of the previous days: the wind had swept it away and banked it into huge drifts among the trees, so that our road upon the frozen sea was none the worse. But though our first day's run was a

good one, and we were able to build our snow house on the summit of the Kiglapeit Pass, half way to Nain, there was sufficient excitement in the second day to make the trip a memorable one.

The Eskimos say that there is always wind in the mountains, but on that second morning the wind was much too strong for comfort, though the men assured me that it was quite safe to travel. But the mountain stream, which is the winter road, was clear of snow, and the dogs could not keep their feet upon it. Each puff of wind sent them skidding about, howling with terror, and the sure-footed little Johannes was kept hard at work lifting the traces over rocks and points of ice while the heavy sledge came bowling after him.

Things were even worse with the sledge. Julius and I were clinging to it, trying to keep its nose to the front, but the gusts swirled it hither and thither and flung us from side to side like corks. At last we came to a frozen waterfall, and the dogs took to the bank. Julius tugged and strained and put forth all his strength and cunning, but the ice was like glass and the sledge would not turn; the runners could get no grip upon the slippery surface, and we were helpless in front of the wind.

After a short few moments of anxious clinging we came up against a boulder, and over we went with a crash. I remember quite well that as I was flung from my hold on the sledge and went sliding down the frozen river I heard Johannes's voice from the bank shouting "Ah—ah—ah" to make the dogs lie down.

I picked myself up and made my precarious way to the sledge by clinging to the boulders—it was

impossible to walk in the ordinary way because of the wind whistling down stream—and found the drivers holding a palaver over a smashed runner. They displayed no consternation at our plight, and had very little to say; at times like that the Eskimo is a man of action, and it seemed quite natural that with a short grunt of explanation little Johannes pulled an axe from among the load firmly lashed to the upturned sledge and trotted off on an errand of his own.

Meanwhile, Julius was looking for his gun, which he had tucked along the floor of my travelling box, and I was amazed to see him load it and start firing at the broken runner. He was using great bullets that he had most likely intended for reindeer, and the effect of each shot was to bore a good-sized hole in the wood. He placed eight of them at intervals along the runner, some near the top and some near the bottom, and then coolly polished out his gun with a wad of tow and made it fast on the sledge again.

By this time Johannes was in sight on the river bank, carrying a long, thin tree over his shoulder; and Julius set to work to find a spare length of seal-hide trace somewhere among his travelling equipment. If only the crash had not jarred my camera open, and fogged every one of the plates, I should have had a series of unique pictures of the sledge-mending; as it was, I was sufficiently fascinated to forget the February cold while I stood and watched those two Eskimos at work. They chopped the tree to the proper length, and flattened it a little on one side; then they threaded the line through the shot holes and bound the tree to the broken

runner. "Taimak" (that will do), they said, and moved away to get the dogs ready. In a few minutes they were lighting their pipes for another start, and we bumped and slid and twisted down the river as if nothing had happened. I noticed that Julius kept the sound runner towards the boulders, as if he hardly cared to put the patched one to any strain, but we jolted over the ridges and raced down the slopes in quite an ordinary way, and made the descent of the pass to the sea-ice in average time.

For an hour or two after leaving the mountains we enjoyed fine weather, but as the afternoon wore on and the sun sank the wind began to follow us again. The air had a queer threatening chill in it; little eddies of snow came whirling along the floor, whisking round us and poking up our sleeves and down our necks, and the dogs dropped their tails and huddled together and whined as they ran. Within half-an-hour we were in the thick of the drift, and I found that running before a storm is no more pleasant than facing it. Johannes, who was sitting by me, pulled his sealskin dicky over him, and shouted "Ananaulungitok-ai" (this is not nice), and I shouted my "Ahaila" back at him with some little apprehension; I knew that it is something out of the ordinary that makes an Eskimo driver put on sealskins over his blanket and calico, but the men always had a word of explanation for me. "All right," shouted Johannes, "very cold now: get to Nain soon," and then he turned his back to the wind, and sat drumming on the runners with his feet to let the dogs think that the driver had his eye on them. As a matter of fact the dogs

were out of sight; I could hear no sound of them above the roaring of the wind, and there was nothing to be seen but the main hauling trace quivering away into the drift and the white floor slipping past.

As long as daylight lasted I could understand how the drivers found the way, because all the flying snow seemed to be whipped up from the floor, and in the occasional lulls of the wind we caught sight of the cliffs and mountains alongside of us. In fact, when the sledge rose up to cross a neck of land we gradually drew above the drift, and could look back and see the sea-ice covered with a rushing cloud of powdery snow that seemed like driven smoke. But when night fell, and the storm roared louder, I began to wonder how we should fare. The dogs were tiring, and would not turn; they wanted the storm behind them; and when all landmarks were swallowed up in the drift and the darkness, and there was nothing for me to see but an occasional glimpse of the stars or the dull glow of the drivers' pipes as they stuffed the tobacco down with their thumbs, little Johannes pulled off his sealskin dicky—and I knew that he was going to run ahead. "Sit on the sledge, or you will get lost," he yelled, and trotted into the dark. It seemed hours before I saw him again, and then I suddenly found him beside me. "Are you cold?" he shouted, and slipped off the sledge again to join Julius where he was wrestling, with hands and teeth, with the frozen and tangled traces. I hardly knew that the sledge had stopped, but presently Johannes ran off again, and there was a mighty jerk as the dogs got up to follow him. The next stop was dramatic. Miles and miles we seemed to have run, when sud-

denly the sledge went grinding over pebbles, and I heard Julius's big voice roaring "Ah." I ran forward, and found that we had stopped close to a huge boulder, about the size of a cottage. Johannes appeared from the darkness ahead, and said, with a jerk of his thumb towards the boulder, "We ought to be on the other side of that." "Illale" (certainly), answered Julius, and swung the nose of the sledge round. "Ha-ha-ha" piped Johannes, and the dogs went after him round the boulder. I could see very little from my seat at the back of the sledge; even Julius, a few feet in front of me, was no more than a silent shape, a sort of petrified man; though I had evidence that he was very wide awake by his sudden lurches and heaves, and the kicks that he gave to the snow, when the sledge needed turning to one side or the other; and that his keen eyes were wide open in the dark I knew by the alacrity with which he suddenly jumped off and hauled the sledge to one side to keep the runner from slipping into a crack. Apart from these little outbursts of energy he seemed well content to sit still and chew his pipe, with his back to the wind and his feet dangling close to the floor. He certainly did not seem to be suffering from cold toes, and if I had remarked upon the fact he would probably have said "Ahaila, I am an Eskimo."

As for myself, I could find no pleasure in sitting stock still; I wanted to run for warmth, but running was an impossibility because of the unevenness of the snow. The Eskimo has a high-stepping gait that serves him very well over rough snow in the dark, but it is not an easy gait to learn, and only those bred on the Labrador manage it. For me it was a case of "sit still," as Johannes had said; so the next



THE UNWILLING PUPPY

The puppies receive their training at the hands of the Eskimo boys, who harness them and compel them to drag small sledges or blocks of ice. The puppies resent this treatment with piteous howls and a most aggravating stubbornness, but after a few days they fall into proper habits.



A SLEDGE PARTY

This shows the Eskimo method of harnessing the dogs, each on a separate trace. The dogs cross and recross incessantly as they run, until the traces are bunched into a great frozen mass; then the driver stops them and undoes the knot with his teeth.

time the sledge stopped I got the polar bear's skin that was lashed over the load, and wrapped myself in that for warmth. The little man from ahead had his usual word of encouragement for me: "Nain in one hour," he said; "no more stops." "However will you find Nain?" I asked him. He waited until the next lull in the wind, and pointed upwards. "Do you see that bright star?" he said; "that star is right over Nain: the people say that if it were to fall it would fall on the village: we go under that star"—and away he went, and I felt the jerk as the sledge started after him. Sure enough, in one hour we raced up the slope to the village of Nain, and the dogs roused the people out of their houses with their yelping.

No doubt Johannes gave me what seemed to him the proper explanation of his method of finding the way in the dark of the storm; he was steering by the star; but I think that he hardly explained the marvellous gift of finding the way that Eskimos have. In blinding snowstorms, and in black darkness under cloudy skies, they go from point to point, silent and self-possessed, knowing places by the dimmest glimpse of some headland or the merest outline of a rock peering through the gloom. More than once I have travelled with them when my eyes could see nothing at all, nothing but driving snow, and they have trotted on without the least hesitation or uneasiness, absolutely certain that they would "get there." It seems to me like a sixth sense—the sense of direction—the same sense that animals display.

On our way home from Nain we passed the big boulder. It lay on the frozen beach, at the foot of a jutting point: on each side there stretched a wide bay. We had crossed the northern bay in the drift,

and had found the boulder after the crossing, only we had tried to pass on the landward side of it, where the wind had swept a path clear of snow and strewn with the beach pebbles. I wondered how we had managed to hit it at all; but as we passed it that morning in the clear winter sunshine Johannes gave a shrug, and said "I got on the wrong side of that!"

Partly, I suppose, his remark was an expression of the scrupulous exactness of the Eskimo mind—the same exactness that is seen in the little models of sledges and canoes that the men make in their spare time: every bit of the innermost working, however hidden it may be from sight, is an exact reproduction of the real thing; the natural tendency of the Eskimo is to be thorough.

Partly it showed Johannes's simple faith in his own gifts as a guide—no brag; utter simplicity.

No one is more careful than an Eskimo sledge-driver, and the quiet watchfulness to avoid every hindrance, and to steer clear of every danger, is part of his nature. No wonder that the driver is always on the move. No chance droppings from the dogs must soil the bright runners, or the sledge will run heavily, so off the driver jumps and heaves the big sledge around; every crevice must be crossed squarely, so that there is no risk of the runners slipping down; there must be no needless bumping over hummocks or frozen waves of snow, and when there must needs be bumps the men use their strength to let the sledge fall gently; and so it comes about that sledge travelling with Eskimo drivers is as safe as sledge travelling can be.

On the way home from one of our journeys in the springtime, we found that the tides had played

havoc with the ice; a crack four or five feet wide lay across the track, and there seemed to be no way of getting round it. "We must go across," said the men. The first thing was to fling or shove the dogs into the water one by one; they made a great to-do about it, but the drivers pushed them all in, and the terrified creatures were soon shaking themselves on the other side. The next thing was to push the sledge along until the front of it bridged the crack and the runners were touching the other side; then with a great howl of "Hu-it" big Julius started the dogs and we all jumped on to the sledge as it careered safely over. Then the drivers turned and looked at one another, and laughed; it was, to them, a spice of excitement in the monotony of sledge travel.

CHAPTER XV

DANIEL—A HUNDRED MILES IN AN OPEN BOAT—DANIEL AS COOK—DANIEL'S HOUSE—THE OLD WIDOW

AFTER the bustle of winter sledge travel, the early days of July seemed to me the dreariest time of the whole year. The ice on the bay was broken, and the water was packed close with the floating pieces. It seemed a dreary time, because we were so shut in; no sledges, no boats, no exercise but walks on the sloppy beach or the softening snow on the hills. Most of the people had gone to their sealing camps, and the few who were left in the village had turned their sledges upside down on the roofs of their houses and were busy at the tarring of their wooden boats, waiting eagerly for the ice to float away and leave the water clear for them. And yet it was on a July day in 1905 that there came the excitement of a shout of "Umiat, umiat" (a boat).

It had nearly reached the jetty before we saw it, a big white boat with a crew of four sturdy Eskimos, who poled their precarious way between the ice-pans; and when the Okak people saw the faces of the men they gave a great shout of "Nainemiut" (Nain people).

I met the four men as they trotted up the jetty, and found, as I had expected, that it was an urgent call that had brought them across a hundred miles of ice-packed sea at a time of year when the Eskimos



THE AUTHOR IN TRAVELLING COSTUME

In sealskin from head to foot, with an under-suit of blanket. The hair of the Labrador seal is coarse; but the dappled black on silver, its natural colour, is exceedingly handsome. The sleeping bag behind is also of sealskin, with a double lining of reindeer skin and blanket.

are wont to say about travelling "Ajorkok" (it cannot be done).

But the boatmen had very little to say about their trip; all they wanted was that I should find a fifth man, so that they might rest by turns from the rowing—"Okumaidlarpok-illa" (very hard work). So I surveyed the village in my mind's eye, searching for a likely boatman among the few who had not gone to the seal-hunt. And I thought of Daniel.

I knew Daniel as a good and handy workman, so I sent for him. Soon he came shyly in—a short, square man with a broad back and muscular limbs, and, above all, a willing, good-natured face. He seemed to have discarded his characteristic "dicky," and was in his summer costume of an ancient jersey, left him, no doubt, by some fisherman from Newfoundland; and he stood waiting, with the expectant air that he always wore when there was work to be done.

"Are you ready to start for Nain at six o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"Yes," said Daniel, without a moment's hesitation, and no more perturbed than if I had asked him to do one of the everyday things at which he is so handy. "Ahaila," he repeated, and turned and went home.

When I walked down the jetty in the morning the four Nain men were at their places: the tallest, chosen captain by his mates, was in the bows with a pole, scrutinising the ice-field; the others were leaning over their oars, smoking and chatting and exchanging gossip with the people who had gathered to see us off.

Stroke-oar was vacant; but even as I looked

about for Daniel, the man himself came lurching along hugging a big stone.

"Aksuse," he said, and dropped the stone gently into the boat. The others took no notice, beyond the usual "Ah," and Daniel ambled off again. For fully five minutes he went on with his task of collecting stones, and at last I asked him, "Are these for ballast?" Daniel grinned and twinkled. "Me cook," he said, and settled to his oar. "Taimak, hai?" said the captain. "Taimak," I answered from my place by the rudder, and we were off.

I really think that the first few miles out of Okak were the slowest that I have ever travelled, not even excepting mauja-travelling on a sledge trip. The pace was a trifle faster than standing still, and that is about the best that I can say for it.

Happily the day was calm, or we could never have moved at all. The method of getting along was simple enough in a way. The oarsmen stood facing the bows, so as to see what was ahead; sometimes they dipped their oars in the water, but more often there was not enough water within reach, and they had to shove the boat along by pushing with their oars on the ice. The captain stood up with his pole, carefully keeping the boat from bumping the ice, and separating the pans to make a passage, and all the while he never ceased from muttering orders to the rowers. The boat's nose was never pointing in one direction for more than a minute or two; north, south, east, and west we steered, and once we were in the ridiculous position of having to wriggle a hundred yards back towards Okak in our search for a way. Things went quietly enough as long as we were in the shelter of the bay, but outside we met

the tide, and found ourselves in a field of ice that was constantly on the move. The captain leaned on his pole, darting this way and that, and yelling his orders at the top of his voice, and the willing boatmen toiled and shoved. At one moment the boat was leaping forward through a clear channel; at the next, a big ice-pan would catch it and fling it round with a shudder, while the men strove to hold it off with their oars and perspired with the exertion. It was an exciting time, but we got through without damage; and I felt as much relieved as the Eskimos when we came to a stretch of open water and left the churning ice behind us. About midday a light breeze sprang up, and the men heaved a great sigh of relief as they drew in their oars. In a minute they had got the sails up, and the captain came jumping over the thwarts and took the tiller.

Two of the oarsmen made their way to the deep bows, and sat there chatting and filling their pipes; another just fell asleep where he was, sprawling over his oar; while Daniel looked up at me with a twinkle, and said again, "Me cook."

He seemed to enjoy my mystification, for his next move was to pull a great butcher-knife from a sheath hanging at his belt, and carefully sharpen it on the palm of his hand. This was his hunting-knife, his dinner-knife, the knife he used for cutting his tobacco and for all the uses possible to imagine, and I wondered what strange new use he had in his mind for the well-worn tool. When it was sharp enough, he chose a nice piece of firewood from a pile at his feet, and began to whittle shavings, looking up with his characteristic grin to repeat his joke—"Me cook, eh?"

When the pile of shavings had grown large enough to earn a contemplative nod of satisfaction, he betook himself to his heap of stones. He cleared a space on the wet floor of the boat, and laid a big flat stone upon it, then he built a wall of smaller stones around it, and filled up the hollow with shavings and wood. Then he knelt down and struck a match, and carefully lit his fire, poking and puffing at it to make it burn. In a few minutes a trail of smoke was streaming away into the air behind us, and Daniel came to the triumphant climax of his joke.

"Pujolik, pujolik" (a steamer), he yelled.

The two men chatting in the bows jumped up with a start; the steersman awoke from his apathy and gazed about him; even the man sprawling across the oar roused himself and raised his sleepy eyes; and Daniel roared with glee at the success of his little plot. "Pujolik," he shouted, pointing to the smoke, and we all entered into the spirit of the thing and laughed boisterously.

Soon the sleepy head dropped again; the steerman's eyes once more took on their dreamy stare; the men in the bows scraped and filled their pipes, and returned to their chatting; and Daniel turned to his fire with a chuckle, and said, "Now, me cook." He seemed to have everything at hand, for he produced a kettle and a keg of water from apparently nowhere with the unconcern of a professional conjuror, and then he foraged in the provision-box for the tin of tea. Oh, Daniel! where did you learn to make tea? I am thankful that the Eskimos like their tea weak, for Daniel's method was to put a pinch of tea in the kettle, fill it up with cold water,

and set it on the fire. In a quarter of an hour or so Daniel was doling the boiling stuff into tin mugs, and we were stirring the molasses in to suit our own fancy. I enjoyed my lunch, for anything hot is welcome on a Labrador journey. I have had too many drinks of icy water, or lukewarm tea from a stone jar carefully wrapped in skins, not to appreciate Daniel's tea. Aye, one might fare worse; and well for the traveller if he has a thoughtful man in the boat, with a kettle and a heap of stones.

Towards evening we once more entered the ice-field, and steered slowly between the heavy pans as they edged to and fro with the gentle swell; and at dusk we made the anchor fast among the stones of an islet at the foot of Cape Kiglapeit, and with half our journey done we sat upon the rocks around the bubbling tea-kettle, and sang our evening hymn. The men cleared a space on the floor of the boat, and spread the sail for an awning, and I laid me down in my sealskin sleeping-bag and listened to the lapping of the water. Before morning the lapping had ceased: the water was frozen round the boat, even on a July night.

These Eskimos are a hardy folk. I found my five boatmen sleeping on a patch of moss among the rocks, snoring contentedly in the cold air without so much as a blanket among them; and they woke in the morning fresh and bright, and while I was talking to Daniel over his breakfast cookery I spied them scanning the ice-field from the highest point of our island.

It was a beautiful spring morning, and the men sang and laughed as they pushed the boat among the ice. Daniel was in his element; he skipped from

one part of the boat to another, always seeming to be in the very thick of the work; and once he seized a rope and ran over the ice to haul us through a narrow passage, while the others lolled and filled their pipes again, and made remarks about Daniel being a "Pujolik, ai" (steamer again). Daniel came to a sudden stop, and shouted, "Jump out, all of you," and in a moment we were on the ice dragging the boat across, high and dry, to plump it into the water again on the other side of the floe. At midday we anchored against a small iceberg, and Daniel clambered upon it to fill his kettle at a pool that the sun was making in a hollow; then we poled on again while the tea was warming over the fireplace of stones. There was a short rest for the men during the afternoon, when the sails were up and we beat to and fro along a sheltered run; but soon the captain said something that brought forth a chorus of "Aha's," and caused a general turning of heads. There was a peculiar turbulence about the water in front of us, and there was something familiar about the hills around; there on the right was the beginning of the sledge-pass over Kiglapeit, and we were entering on the piece of water that never freezes. Soon we were tumbling and twisting among the currents of a sort of miniature whirlpool, and the oarsmen were straining and shouting in time while the captain steadied the boat as well as he could with the long sculling-oar at the stern. I had seen the black spot of water on the white sheet of ice only a month or two before, and many a time as we passed the place on our winter journeys I had wondered why Julius led the dogs close under the rock. All the explanation he had given me was

"Sikkokarungnaipok-tava" (never frozen); but now I understood how the power of the battling currents gives the ice no chance to set, even in the bitter cold of January.

The men were exhausted by the time the currents were bubbling half a mile behind us, and nodded and grinned with appreciation when I suggested supper. I decided on hot meat; but as we had only one cooking utensil the tea and meat would have to take turns, and Daniel chuckled as he helped me to scrape the mutton out of the tin into his useful kettle. We anchored at the mouth of a little brook that was trickling through the melting snow, and within a few minutes we were eating our mutton out of our teacups while the kettle sat on the fire filled with its usual cold water and tea-leaves. We rinsed our cups at the rivulet, and drank the hot tea thankfully; then I took out the Bible, and the men clustered round me for the evening reading. I sat afterwards gazing at the lowering sky, while the captain spread the sail over my sleeping-place in the stern, and the others lay on the moss and smoked. The captain came to me. "Storm to-morrow," he said; "you go to sleep now; we row all night"; and without another word he called to the oarsmen and hauled the anchor up from the water. Good-hearted fellows; how I admired their pluck. Rather than risk delay they would toil all night at the oars, because the wind was coming, and to-morrow it might be impossible to travel among the ice-pans.

As I lay in the dark under the sail I could hear the rhythmic creaking of the boards under the feet of the captain, as he stood at my head rolling his

heavy sculling-oar, and I could hear the steady thump of the oars against the thole-pins, and the swish and drip of the water; and, lulled by the measured sounds and rocked by the gentle roll, I fell asleep. I woke in the dark hour before the dawning, and heard the sound of singing; it was Daniel's voice, crooning a favourite hymn. Presently the others took up the song, and sang, so softly, so as not to wake me up, but keeping time to the plashing of their oars. Hymn after hymn they sang to pass the night away. Soon after sunrise we reached the wide open water that narrows towards Nain, and then up went the sail and in came the oars, and with the water hissing past us and the ropes groaning and the mast creaking under the strain of the wind we raced into Nain harbour.

The people were waiting on the jetty. They shouldered the bags and boxes; the boatmen stowed away the sail and oars, and anchored the boat, and then went home to sleep, smiling and good-humoured to the end.

That was the beginning of my closer acquaintance with Daniel; indeed, we are such good friends that I have even heard him talk about his hunting exploits. "Aha," says Daniel, "when I was a young man I met a bear, and hadn't any gun—ai, ai"—and up went his fingers, stiff and straight, to show how his hair stood on end—"ai, ai, I don't know which was the more frightened, I or the bear; for after we had stood and looked at one another for a long time, the bear turned and ran away. If it had not run away, I suppose I should have run myself. I went home for my gun; and next day I found its tracks and shot the bear."

DANIEL'S HOUSE

Daniel's house is an architectural curiosity. For some reason, or perhaps for no reason at all, it is at the very end of the village, furthest from the church, furthest from the store, furthest from the jetty where the boats are moored. In front is the usual porch, open to the weather and tenanted by the dogs. The door is fastened by a wooden latch, which you can lift from the outside by pulling a bobbin that dangles from a thong of seal-hide. Inside you find yourself in a square space where stands an iron stove, and from a big bubbling pot on the top of the stove there is generally rising the savoury smell of seal-meat stew. Seals and skins and wooden pans of blubber are strewed about the floor; a keg of water stands near the wall, and a rough bedstead fills a corner.

But this is only the smaller part of Daniel's house; the larger part lies further in. It is a big oblong shack, with a sloping roof and walls hung with dingy illustrated papers; and it is placed cross-wise, so that the little square part of the house looks into it from one side. In the middle of the oblong is a table, surrounded by the customary wooden boxes that serve for seats and storage places; at the two ends are sleeping places, roughly partitioned off. A peep behind the partitions discloses an array of bunks, where the children sleep; a variable array, sometimes one above the other like berths on board ship, sometimes side by side. I have seen the bunks without sides, and once I found one of them missing altogether, but this was after one of our Labrador storms had kept everybody indoors for a couple of days, and the stock of firewood had dwindled. After the storm one of the boys drove away to

the woods with the three dogs and fetched more firewood, and Daniel himself trotted along to the store and got an old packing-case and spent the rest of the day at the necessary piece of plain carpentry.

I could see with half an eye that Daniel's house had not all been built at one time; it looked like two small houses joined together; and it was not until Daniel had pointed to an old, old woman crouching on the bed in the little square part, a pathetic figure whom I had overlooked, that I hit upon the real meaning of the queer architecture. "That poor old woman," said he, "was left all alone when her husband died. She had nobody to take care of her, so my boys and I brought our house along and built it up at the back of the old woman's hut—takka"— and he pointed to the oblong portion. "It was a good thing for us all, for we all have plenty of room, and one stove warms us all." Yes, I thought, and in his unconscious way Daniel has done that old widow a thoroughly characteristic Eskimo act of kindness. Poor old soul, she is blind and deaf, and can do little else but sit over the stove and enjoy the genial warmth; but an Eskimo likes to work to the last, and I have seen even that old blind widow sitting behind a snow-wall on the winter ice, patiently jigging for fish, until the sun began to sink and a little child came out to lead her home.

Such is Daniel's household; and Daniel himself, an ordinary, everyday Eskimo, goes in and out as he follows his hunting and his daily work. He is just an Eskimo, with his little foresight, and his socialistic openhandedness, and his weaknesses and

his limitations; but the good in him comes from the one source of all good, and for him some day there will be the Master's voice — "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me."

CHAPTER XVI

OUT WITH THE SEAL-HUNTERS—THE HARPOON—SHOOTING A SEAL—A GRUESOME CUSTOM—HAULING THE NETS

THE last few weeks before the freezing of the sea are a busy time for the Eskimos: the whole village is in the ferment of a new excitement, for the seal-hunt is beginning.

As I strolled along the snow-covered path that runs in front of the huts I found men and boys busily getting their kajaks ready for the water, lifting them down from house-tops and scaffold poles, searching for leaky places, smoothing the handles of pautiks (paddles), bustling to and fro with harpoons and loops of line, beaming with eagerness, and evidently looking forward to their favourite season. Every year it was the same, and I watched the preparations with interest; but my interest was doubled when Jerry touched my sleeve and said, "Kaigit," (come), and gave me a place in the stern of his boat to see the fun.

If I had thought that I was in for a mad chase among the waves I was to be disappointed, for I soon found that nets were the order of the hunt —nets stretched along the sea-bed in some well-known and favourite channel or inlet, with a patient waiting in a smoky hut till morning, when the nets would be hauled.

I envied the men in the kajaks; they were after seals in the proper old style, with their ingenious

walrus-tusk harpoons; but there is no room for a passenger in a kajak, and I had to content myself with watching from a distance. And I had another disillusionment, for Jerry shot a seal with his Winchester rifle. The Eskimo is fond of his rifle; it makes his hunting so much easier, but it takes a lot of the picturesque away. And it is chasing the animals away, too. It seemed a fairly natural thing for an Eskimo to go after a walrus or a white bear with kajak and harpoon; the creature must have felt that it was meeting its great enemy on equal terms; but when the rifle comes in the man has, from the bear's or walrus's point of view, an almost uncanny advantage. An unnatural element enters into the hunt; the animals became more wary; they are more frightened than ever by the smell of man; and away they go to the far north, where they can fish and gambol unmolested. But happily—from the picturesque point of view—your Eskimo is too conservative to give up the ways of his fathers; he still likes to shoulder his kajak or balance it on his head, and pick his way among the stones to the sea, and launch it with its weird and ingenious equipment all ready for seal-hunting. The harpoon lies ready at his right; and as he wields his paddle he is always on the alert to let drive at the seal as it pops up for air. The skill with the harpoon is a thing that the Eskimos have not lost, nor will they lose it, I hope, till the end of time. When I look at the harpoon that hangs upon my wall, my mind travels back across the centuries to a time when the Eskimos first learnt to hunt; and I imagine the hunter spearing the seal with a long straight spear. A seal is a ponderous beast, and

agile withal; and I can imagine the creature, stung by the sharp stab, diving with a jerk so sudden that the spear broke short. This meant losing both seal and spear; and seals and spears were precious. I imagine one of these old hunters having a flash of genius, the sort of flash that sometimes comes to these native peoples, and saying to himself, "If my spear must break, I will make a joint so that it may break without being spoilt." Or perhaps it came more slowly, and so some one who could not get a new head for his spear bored holes in the broken pieces with his flint boring-tool, and bound the broken ends together with seal-hide thongs; and, lo and behold, next time he used his spear it broke again at the mended place, and he bound it up again wondering. Whether with a sudden inspiration, or with the slower method of a gradual evolution from that mended spear, no man can say; but I imagine a time dawning when all the spears were jointed at the head, and the hunters flung them with an added eagerness because they knew that the problem of smashed harpoons was solved. The evolution of the harpoon went on; the spear was a deadly thing; it killed, but it did not hold, and so some thoughtful mind invented a barb.

The tusk which forms the head of the spear cannot well be carved into a barbed shape, because it is too slender. So came the next thing: the barb must be separate, bound on with a thong; and then the hunter made the discovery of his life. When the head broke at its joint the thong, of course, fell slack—and the barb fell off. Now the harpoon was perfect. No need to risk the loss of the precious tusk; the barb would do the work. Let the line that

held it in place on the tip of the spear be a long one, with a loop to hitch on to a knob on the shaft, and with a bladder or float at the other end, thirty or forty feet away. The seal might dash off or dive as fast as it liked; the shaft and jointed head would be shaken free and would float on the water, but there would be no shaking free from the keen grip of the barb with its long trailing line and bobbing float.

This little flight of imagination in which I have indulged is, to my mind, the true explanation of one of the most marvellous weapons that I have ever seen—the real Eskimo harpoon.

No skilled mechanic has helped in its making; it is the pure outcome of native genius, the finished product of generations of hunting. Over it the hunter spends long hours of patient scraping and rubbing and boring and fitting; the socketed joint is as neat and firm as clever hands can make it; and the result is that the harpoon in the hands of a modern Eskimo hunter does what he expects it to do, and does it every time.

The man sits balanced in his dancing kajak, and flings his harpoon at the fat neck of the seal as it pops up for a breath of air. The animal feels the sudden pain, and dives with a lurch.

The hunter calmly and methodically reaches for the blown-up skin that lies behind him, and drops it on the waves. He knows that the harpoon will bend where the head is jointed, and that the point of the tusk will slip away from the socket in the barb; he knows that the line will unloop itself from the knob on the shaft, and that the shaft and jointed head will float in a piece upon the water; he knows that the seal has dived with the barb firmly bedded

in its flesh, but he knows, too, that the line will follow, dragging the bobbing float to act as a mark; and when he has picked up his spear he paddles towards the float and waits for the seal to come up again. There is no great risk of the barb slipping—why, strong fellows like Julius and Paulus can throw the harpoon with such terrific force that the barb sometimes goes clean through the seal. The rest is easy; the seal comes to the surface, dead, maybe, or dazed and faint, and an easy target for the killing dart. Then the hunter's pulses throb. "Puijesimavok" (he has caught a seal), and he seizes it with a long hook with notches in its handle, and lifts it by resting the notches one after the other on the edge of his frail kajak until he can slide the slippery carcase on to the skin deck in front of him. Then he arranges the harpoon and float in their places, and paddles homewards.

The harpoon that big Julius gave me hangs upon my wall, but the float is somewhere on the broad Atlantic—probably some prowling shark has made a breakfast of it. I tried to bring it home. First I put it under the cabin table. "Don't risk it in the hold," said the second mate, "the rats will have it."

Under the table it stayed for a day or two, but it was too much for us. Every time we sat down to meals we kicked the awful thing; its subtle odour flavoured our food. Somebody would send it flying across the cabin floor, and there it would lie until one of us tripped over it in the dark; it was an odoriferous nuisance. Last of all I hung it up; but as we stumbled across the unsteady floor as the ship rolled along, we used to meet that unsavoury shape

with our faces. The very look of the bloated thing took our appetites away. The voting was unanimous and pressing. "Overboard with it," so I regretfully cast it to the sharks, and watched it dance upon the waves, as it had often danced for big Julius when he had a seal.

But I must get back to Jerry's boat. Our particular seal hunt on that November morning was partly an accidental one. I was sitting in the stern of the boat, watching the rocks and the water. It was a new thing to me, this scum of ice that the waves were flinging up; and the spray from the oars was freezing as the wind whipped it over the side of the boat.

I could see the kajaks further out, paddling about in an aimless sort of way; but I was mostly watching the line of glistening boulders at the foot of the rocks, with the oily-looking sea swilling over them, and the sunshine gleaming on the crust of ice which the waves were leaving on them. The man with the sculling-pole, who was standing beside me in the stern, suddenly whispered "Puije" (a seal) and his face grew tense and eager. The oarsmen stopped and turned to look, while Jerry, the owner of the boat, hurriedly crammed a cartridge into his rifle.

This was all very mysterious to me. I was looking all round for a head above the water, or for any bubbles or disturbance that might mean a seal; but everything seemed as usual; the dots of kajaks went paddling on, and the sea swilled over the stones.

Jerry seemed to aim at the line of boulders below the rocks, and my eyes followed the line of his barrel; but I saw nothing until the bang started a splodge of red on one of the stones. The red seemed to slide into

the water, and the boat was off with a jerk. The oarsmen pulled with all their might; the man at the stern was rolling the boat from side to side with the force of his sculling; and Jerry was eagerly looking out and shouting terse directions. There seemed to be nothing but the red patch near the rocks, where the water was all stained with blood; but as the steersman brought the boat sweeping round the others pulled in their oars and leaned over the side, and in less time than it takes to tell I was helping them to heave a big seal into the boat. It came slithering over and flopped down, and lay there, limp and lifeless, with whiskers quivering and big eyes seeming to gaze right into mine. It looked just like one of the rocks close by; its silvery coat, flecked with black and shining with wet, was a perfect imitation of the black boulders with their coating of ice and the water swilling over them. No wonder my eyes could not see it when the steersman did; but Eskimo eyes are different.

For the moment things seemed strangely quiet: there was something so human in the look of those big placid brown eyes that I felt almost miserable to see the innocent thing lying dead. But I came back from my dreams with a start. My boatmen seemed to go back of a sudden to their ancestry of hundreds of years ago; for one minute the old original Eskimo in them welled up and drowned all that I knew of them. They slit the seal's throat and sucked its warm blood.

Our organist, who can render classical tunes from the oratories for voluntaries in church, and who can play any instrument in the band that he chooses; the schoolmaster, who can preach a sermon, and teach



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SEAL-HUNTERS

They go out in the autumn, always on the alert to fling the harpoon that lies ready at their right hand. The seal is brought home on the deck of the kajak, and the arrival is always followed by a feast of raw sealmeat for all.

the youngsters their A B C, and their smattering of geography and arithmetic; the man who sings the tenor solos in the choir—they were, after all, just Eskimos, with all the instincts of the Eskimo still strong within them, not a whit spoilt for the rough life that is their inheritance. They bent in a group over that quivering seal, and quaffed the warm blood that welled out of it. That heartened them! That made them mighty hunters! That kept the cold out —and, after all, it was a custom of the people.

They picked up their oars and rowed on, and I was thankful for what I had seen. The Eskimos are Eskimos yet.

The casual visitor in the summer time sees them salting fish for market, and drinking tea and eating biscuits; he finds them wearing European clothes, and great clod-hopping hob-nailed boots, that they have bought from schooner folk in exchange for skin clothes and home-made sealskin boots: he might think that the Eskimos of the picture-books were gone, and that only among the icy solitudes of the Polar regions, and in the unknown creeks of Baffin's Land, were there people true to the type. But no, even in Labrador, where European missionaries have been working for a hundred and forty years, and where everybody is taught to read and write, where Christianity has taken the place of the uncanny incantations of the witch-finders and the weird chantings of the priests of Torngak, the Eskimos are Eskimo to the core. In the church, on the ship, in the presence of visitors, their native ways are not much in evidence; they are still shy of strangers, and fear to be laughed at; but with those who live among them, those who, like myself, travel with them and eat with them and

speak their language, they are the kind-hearted, open-handed, raw-meat-eating Eskimos. An Eskimo is no less a Christian because he sucks blood from a freshly killed seal: he can thank God for his food just as well as we can for ours.

I never thought that I should sleep in a greenhouse on the freezing coast of Labrador, but that is how I spent that night. The missionaries at Okak had given up their greenhouse after futile efforts to grow early vegetables, and had sold it for a mere song to one of the seal hunters. He took it away in sections, and put it together at the sealing place, and was very proud of it altogether. By daylight it reminded me rather of a photographic studio, and the properties—rough bedsteads, a battered stove, a couple of decrepit chairs, and a whole host of nets and dogs' harness and spears and hatchets and rusty guns—would have given me some unique pictures if I had had the chance to stay awhile. But time was precious: I only wanted to see the hauling of the net, and then I must go home again.

We were out soon after daybreak, and it was cold.

The winter that came afterwards was far less biting; for the autumn wind, blowing over the freezing sea, nipped and chilled me as nothing that I have ever known. It was interesting enough to see the Eskimos trotting down to the rocks where the shore-rope lay, and where the float that marked the far end of the net danced on the black water. I was half frozen, stamping about to get warm; and they—they cheerfully pulled the wet ropes up, chewing at their pipes and chatting merrily, and every now and again stopping to wring the water out of their sodden

gloves. The cold did not seem to bite them: "Unêt" (what does it matter), they said, "it is our life: we are made for it"; and they pulled their stiffening gloves on again to keep the rope from chafing their hands. They got the heavy seals out all stiff and dead, and piled them in a sort of stockade to freeze, ready to be fetched home during the winter. One was partly eaten by sharks. "Sharks no good at all," they said; "eat the seals and break the nets. Sometimes we catch him, but he is no good except for dogs' food, and his skin makes fine sandpaper for smoothing the sledge runners."

It was only the middle of November, but Okak Bay was already beginning to freeze at the edges. The boatmen had to smash the new ice with their oars, and as we got nearer the jetty our boat stuck, and one of the men climbed over the side and clung there, stamping a passage with his heels.

Jerry and his men only stayed long enough to buy a few necessaries at the store; and I watched them shove their boat through the passage we had just made, which was already half frozen, and hoist their sail. With a wave of the hand and a shout of "Aksunai," they set their course for the mouth of the bay, and I walked up the jetty to the village.

For a fortnight the hunters were busy with their nets and their kajaks; and then the sea was frozen, and the seal hunt was over for the season. The seals were away to their winter haunts at the edge of the ocean ice; winter had begun—and the nets were frozen in. It happens the same way every year: the people want to make the most of their opportunity, and they cannot tell exactly when the sea will freeze, so they leave the nets in the water a day too long

rather than have them up a day too soon; and every year they have the awkward job of hacking them out. They waste no time, for every minute the ice is getting thicker. As soon as morning comes, and they see the "sikko" (ice) that covers their bay, they trot along with axes to tackle one of the coldest bits of work that it is possible to imagine.

They only need to free the ropes where they dip below the surface, for the net is at the sea bottom, and once freed with the axes there is nothing to do but haul. But the hauling! In my eagerness to have every possible experience I lent a hand at the rope, but my fingers stiffened round it, and I suffered all the agony of gripping a red-hot poker. My poor hands ached for hours. And the Eskimos tugged at the rope, and gathered up the meshes all stiffening in the wind and dripping with icicles, and piled the net on the rocks above high-water mark, and rubbed their hands indifferently, and ambled off to get their sledges ready. "Home for Christmas" was the word; and in a few days the sledges came racing round the bend into Okak Bay, bringing the families back to their winter homes at the Mission village.

CHAPTER XVII

At the Edge of the Ice—A Tragedy—Landing a Walrus —Martin's First Seal

THOUGH times have changed since the old days, and a man can sell his fish and blubber and furs at the store and buy flour and ship's biscuits and other plain things, the nature of the Eskimos has not changed. They still like to depend on the hunt for their daily food; they still go out hungry in the morning, and gorge themselves on the raw flesh of the seals they bring home. This is their custom, part of their nature, born in them; they are a nation of hunters, and whatever changes in morals and housing and education passing years have seen among them, in this one thing they do not change. And well it is that the Mission has been able to keep them true to their traditions in this matter, for to my mind there is no doubt at all that the life of a hunter is the ideal life for an Eskimo. It is the life for which he is especially gifted; the raw meat that he eats keeps him fit and well, and the exposure hardens him to bear the climate of his frozen land. And I do not base my belief on conjecture only; I base it upon what I have seen. At Okak, and in the north generally, the people are broad and plump, with flat faces and sunken noses; but further south I have seen lean, sharp-faced Eskimos, with bony limbs and pointed noses. They are pure-blooded Eskimos, all of them; they may be lean and bony without any

admixture of other blood; and the cause of the change lies in the altered food and habits of the people themselves.

At the southern stations they are more in contact with the outside world, and, especially, there are English-speaking settlers living among them, cod-fishing and fur-trapping. The Eskimos are born imitators; they do what they see others do; and when they have settler folks living among them in little wooden shacks like their own, and passing in and out among them, it is small wonder that they fall into the settler habits of food and clothing.

They take to garments of cloth instead of the sealskin that Nature has given them; and they eat less of their raw meat and blubber and more of the bread and tea and cooked meats of the settlers. And Nature rebels. The southern Eskimos are, as a consequence, less hardy than their northern brethren; they cannot bear cold so well, but need more fire, more clothing, and more warm food; and their children are more puny. This is an unfortunate thing, but I must record it for completeness' sake, because it is one of the dangers that threatens the Eskimo people as civilisation overtakes them. If they give up their native foods they will dwindle and die out. This is my firm belief, and so I record with all the more satisfaction how I found my neighbours at Okak to be real Eskimo hunters.

During the long winter that followed the home-coming of the families to their wooden homes in the village the men were seldom idle. In my visits to the houses I always found the women in charge, and my question "Aipait nannekâ?" (where

is your husband?) nearly always brought the answer "Sinâmut aigivok" (he is off to the edge of the ice again). That is the hunting-place that the Eskimos love, the edge of the ocean ice, where the seals sport in the chilly water or clamber on the ice to rest. Sometimes, when sudden sickness has called me into the village in the small hours of the morning, I have heard the scufflings and yelpings of dogs, and have seen dim and shadowy men, dressed in sealskin clothes, trotting down the track among the hummocks towards the sea ice, off to the "sinâ."

When I talked about the sinâ to big Gustaf he simply said "We go, eh? Start at four: I will wake you up," taking it for granted that if I went at all I would do it in proper Eskimo style. As this was more or less of a pleasure trip I made a sort of compromise with good Gustaf's ideas on the subject, and the clock was well on towards five before I met him on the doorstep.

I was fortified with a good breakfast of bacon and eggs—eggs kept in waterglass since the ship brought them last summer—but Gustaf would have none. "No," he said, "I shall eat by-and-by"; and from what I had seen of Eskimo mealtimes I imagined him disposing of several pounds of seal-meat and a pint or two of weak tea when the day's work was done.

Nevertheless I saw that he was chewing, pensively chewing with a steady champ, champ, champ, as he disentangled the dogs from one another.

"What are you chewing?" said I.

"Koak" (frozen), answered Gustaf; and he went on to tell me that he had got a mouthful of frozen

raw sealmeat; that was plenty; it was the custom of the people. "Ananâk" (splendid); he said, "*it* makes me warm; it gives me sinews; piovok-illa" (good indeed). I envied him his warmth, for on a raw bleak morning like that the effects of bacon and hot coffee are soon gone, and I was forced to try to trot in the darkness to keep my circulation up.

It was the middle of the morning before we got among the lumps and hummocks and hollows of the sinâ; and there were signs of other hunters on the field before us. We passed a little snow hut, with sledge tracks beside it, and Gustaf said, "Johannes probably. He came here yesterday: Slept all night, hunt all day."

We were a pleasure party, but Gustaf had brought his gun, and was crouching with eager face among the hummocks. Presently there was a bang, and he was all excitement. "Pivunga" (I hit it), he said. "Takka, takka (there, there): where can I get a kajak?"

There was no kajak to be had, and I thought he was going to lose his seal; but no, he was not to be beaten; he climbed on to a floating piece of ice, and paddled off to fetch his prize. There he crouched on his precarious perch, with I don't care to think how many fathoms of freezing water under him; and presently I saw him rafting back, with the dead seal trailing after. I think he seemed to like the spice of danger—or perhaps he did not know what danger meant. Yet danger there is, as we were reminded not many days later, when a sledge drove into Okak Bay with an Eskimo boy sitting upon it. He sat strangely still, and that was enough

to make us think that something was wrong, for an Eskimo driver is nearly always trotting beside his sledge. The dogs turned hungrily towards their accustomed door, but the boy took no notice of them, but left them in their harness and ran towards the Mission house. I watched him pass, ashen faced, panting, stumbling; and a little later I heard his story. At first incoherently, then with graphic gestures and loud lamentations he told his tale; and here it is.

His name was Rena, and he had started at daybreak for the edge of the ice. His brother, Jakko, was with him, and they were after seals. They had a harpoon and a gun, and they talked as they went of the splendid hunt they would have on so fine a day. Tautuk! such clear, calm water and so many seals swimming about; it was a real day for the sinâ, and before they had been there many minutes Jakko had shot a seal. It was wounded and floated on the water, lashing with its flappers but too weak to dive. Oh for a boat or a kajak; but they had none, and reach that seal they must. They did what Eskimos always have done in like circumstances and always will do; they clambered on a piece of loose ice and paddled with their hands towards the seal.

They got on fairly well until they were twenty or thirty yards from the edge of the icefield and the seal was near enough to be speared. Jakko stood up and poised his harpoon, ready to strike, while Rena paddled gently with his hands to steady the ice-raft. The change of position must have upset the balance of the ice, for no sooner did Jakko stand up than it began to heel slowly over. For a moment they were too intent on the seal to notice their peril, but as the

movement increased it dawned upon them that they were turning over.

And then the slow-witted Jakko had one of those flashes of inspiration that come at such times; with a quick cry of "Stay where you are, Rena," he jumped into the water. Exactly what was in his mind we never knew. One thing is certain—he saw the danger. If both stayed upon the ice it would upset and both would be in the water; he could swim a little, but Rena could not do a stroke. Did he think to reach the safety of the icefield by swimming, or did he say, "Better one to be drowned than both"? Whatever the explanation, all that Rena could say was that he felt the ice-pan rolling over; he heard the shout of "Stay where you are," and saw his brother leap into the waves. And that was all. The raft righted itself with a lurch that nearly flung him off; but he managed to hold on and paddled frantically to and fro in a vain search for his brother. Poor Rena paddled and paddled and paddled until his brain reeled and his hands were stiff, but never a sign did he see of Jakko. Folks do not get drowned in water like that; it was the Atlantic, two or three degrees below freezing point, cold enough to numb the brain and paralyse the heart of the strongest; and so poor Jakko met his death. Like a flash he had sunk in the dark water, dazed and helpless. Hours after the catastrophe Rena scrambled from his frail island on to the safe icefield and flung himself on to the sledge and let the dogs take him home.

This is the true story of two boys that I knew, Jakko and Rena Mellik, one of whom threw his life away to save the other. It gives the Eskimo a lift

towards the heroic in one's imagination; they are a nation of stolid, unemotional hunters, used to facing death in icefields and canoes and awful storms on mountain passes, quiet and unconcerned in times of danger, but capable at a crisis of showing that greater love that prompts a man to lay down his life for his friend.

There was gloom for a few days after the tragedy of Jakko; but the Eskimos soon forget; bereavement does not wound them very deeply, and soon the village wore its usual air of subdued bustle, and away at the sinâ the hunters were after the seals.

But seals are not the only quarry; by far the best fortune that a man can have at the sinâ is to catch sight of a walrus resting on the ice. The great idea is to rush boldly upon the ponderous beast and spear or shoot it while it is too dazed to move. It has no chance; it is unwieldy and slow and has hardly made up its mind which way to turn before the hunter is on it and its life is over. "Ahaila," said Gustaf with a grin when I asked him about it, "Eskimo make a noise and run fast and Aivek (walrus) stay there all the time and get killed plenty soon. Go quiet, creep, creep, creep, and old Aivek smell Eskimo and crawl off to the water. Flop, gone, no catch him now; plenty frightened, no good." I knew very well while Gustaf was telling me all this in his queer, broken English, with wavings of his hands and expressive grins and shrugs, that he would be quite ready to embark in his kajak and hunt the walrus in its native element. A walrus is, no doubt, a formidable beast; its ferocious eyes and bristling whiskers and great gleam-tusks make a terrible picture; and the very weight

of its tremendous rush would be enough to frighten most folks, quite apart from the uncanny agility the huge animal displays. But the Eskimo in his kajak is a match for the walrus; he is every whit as active, and twice as sharp-witted; and if the men at the sinâ see a walrus disporting himself in the water they are after him like a shot; and though they do not often have the chance that my Killinek guide had, of paddling into the middle of a school of walruses and calmly harpooning the old bull because he had the best tusks, they seldom let the odd ones and twos escape if they get within striking distance.

Landing a walrus is no joke. I say "landing" because it is the only word to convey the idea of hauling the great carcase out of the water on to the ice, and the ice is every bit as good as land to the Eskimos. What a walrus weighs I do not know, but it stands to reason that a creature fourteen feet long and fourteen feet round the middle is an enormous lump to lift.

No Eskimo would dream of trying to pack a whole walrus on his sledge; for one thing it would roll off at the first lurch, and, for another thing, I hardly think that any sledge could stand the strain. Gustaf grinned and shook his head at this idea of mine. "My sledge stand anything," he said; "got no nails in it, only fine seal-hide thongs; very strong;" and though Gustaf may have overrated his sledge, I have seen him drive his twenty dogs up to the Mission house with a load of drinking water, two great puncheons of it, full half a ton in weight, and that should be a fair test of workmanship. But another reason for cutting up a walrus at the sinâ is



AN ESKIMO WITH HIS KAJAK

Getting into a kajak needs a good deal of skill, and getting out is even more difficult. The Eskimo way is to bring the craft alongside a stone, and step gingerly in from that; if there are no stones, the only method is to crawl along from one end.

than an old Eskimo custom steps in and says it must be so.

Every one who sees the capture must have a share.

The lucky hunter skins his huge catch, and chops it into chunks, and hands the pieces round. Even the interested visitor there on a pleasure trip gets a great piece thrust upon him.

As for myself, I drew the line at walrus. The flesh is rank and coarse, and even the liver is tough; and though I have tried to eat the boiled skin which the Eskimos find so tasty, I preferred to leave it to them—it seemed more natural to let them eat what they could, and make the rest into whips and sledge drags, than to loosen my teeth over its exceeding toughness.

Shortly after my visit to the sinâ I saw a boy walking along the village path, carrying what looked like a big and slimy slug.

Whatever horrible thing had the lad got? He carried it by the middle, and it dangled quivering on each side of his hand. He had an air of importance with him, and every one he met stopped to say a word and to have a look at his loathsome handful.

Behind him marched his father and mother, both looking very proud.

"Hai, Martin," I shouted, "what have you got?"

"Kissek" (sealskin), he said, and came trotting along to unroll his package on the snow, and display a fresh sealskin well scraped and washed and sodden with brine. "My first seal," he said, grinning shyly. Ikpeksak anguvara" (I caught it yesterday).

He seemed in a hurry to be off, so I let him go

without further question, and watched the little procession make its way to the Mission house. During the evening I saw his father again, and broached the subject of Martin's sealskin.

Lukas's eyes brightened. "Illa, illa," he said, "Martin angusimavok" (Martin has quite caught a seal)—as much as to say, "My son is a grown-up hunter now: he is a man."

"And what was he doing with the sealskin?" said I.

"Issumaminik" (his own idea), answered Lukas; and he wandered off into a long story of the catching of the seal. "I took him to the sinâ yesterday, to look after my dogs; but there came a seal very close, and I lent Martin my gun, and he shot it.

"Kuvianarmêk (what rejoicing there was)—there were many people there, and Martin cried 'Anguvara, anguvara,' and they all came running to see. He knows how to skin a seal and cut it up, because he has often seen his mother do it. Illa, he is a man now, ernera-una (that son of mine). We all drank its blood, and Martin drank too—his first seal—and he cut the skin and blubber off, for they are his own. He caught the seal himself, with his own hand. Nakomêk (how thankful). And he cut the seal in pieces, and gave everybody a piece, for that is a custom of the people when a boy kills his first seal. He saved the liver for his father and mother, as is right to do; and he put a big special lump of the best meat on the sledge because his mother told him to do so, and we brought it home.

"What shall we do with it? Illa"—with a twinkle—"that is for old Henrietta. She was the helper when he was born; she it was who saw him

safely into the world, and dressed him in his first clothes. Surely she shall have a share of Martin's first seal—and, besides, it is a custom of the people. The blubber he will sell at the store to-morrow, and that will be the first money he has earned at the seal hunt: illa, he is very proud and thankful. Now he shall go with me to the sinâ every day, except when he must stay at home and chop firewood for his mother, for he is a good boy, ernera-una; and he will catch seals often, and learn to be as fine a hunter as his father—better, perhaps, for my eyes are not as good as they were. And soon, when I am an itok (old man) and his mother is a ningiok (old woman) he will go alone to the hunt and bring seals every day, and I shall stop at home and chop the firewood; and he will have a wife to help the ningiok scrape the skins, and the kittorngakulluit (little children) will play about the floor. But I still have nukke (sinews): I will go to the sinâ to-morrow, and he will chop wood. And the skin? The skin of Martin's first seal? Illa, issumaminik, it was quite his own idea. We had been reading how the people of Israel used to give the first-fruits to God, and Martin thought he would like to do that with the first seal he had ever caught; so he took the skin to the missionary, and that is how you saw him yesterday."

CHAPTER XVIII

FUR-TRAPPING—A NEW YEAR'S GODSEND—THE REINDEER HUNT

NO sooner is one hunting season over than another begins; or, to be more exact, there is always hunting to be done of one sort or another, and sometimes two sorts at a time.

I thought that perhaps the men would be rather idle after the sledges came home for Christmas, waiting for the sea-ice to harden right out to the edge; but there is very little idleness in an Eskimo hunter's life. Sometimes I have gone into one of the huts in the daytime, and while the hunter was taking his well-earned rest between his morning tramp to the traps and his strenuous afternoon of wood-chopping, I have stepped across his sleeping figure to watch his wife stretching a fox-skin upon a wooden shape, and have seen the pot of fox-flesh stewing over the stove, ready for a feast when father should wake up; and the mother has put down her scraper and wiped her hands and turned the skin with careful fingers, to show me the lovely fur of a white or red or even a silver fox, and then has gently turned it back and taken up her scraper to plod slowly and cautiously on at the work she has to do to get the skin ready for market, her eyes gleaming as she thought of the dollars and dollars that that skin meant, and of all the food and clothing and even luxuries that those dollars would buy—a new roof for the house,

maybe, for it was sadly leaky in the springtime, or a new gun for the hunter, and clothes for every one of them, not to speak of a barrel of flour and a bag of ship's biscuit and a hanging lamp to burn paraffin oil!

The hunter is as careful as his wife over those valuable furs—and woe betide her if he catches her making a tear or a cut in the course of her scraping! There must be no spot, no blemish, no mark upon the skin; and when he finds a fox in his trap, if it is not already dead from the cold he dare not risk spoiling the fur by shooting it, but kneels upon its chest and so puts an end to its life.

The Mission pays very generous prices for furs, and one can easily understand that the result of a night's trapping may make a poor man rich at a single bound. It happened that way in the case of a poor fellow called Mêlê, who lived in a hut on the hill behind us. All the autumn he lay ill; and the seal hunt went by and left him destitute. He could not even hire his net out as some men do, because he was too poor to own one: he was one of the kajak men, and was wont to depend altogether upon his skill with the harpoon. So the boisterous autumn passed, and never a chance did he get to go a-hunting: the ice came, and he was penniless. He was not starving, for the Eskimos are always neighbourly enough to find food for one another, and he had help from the Mission and the hospital; but his position was a serious one, for he had a large family to keep, and he had the winter to face without seals. That would mean giving up his few dogs, for dogs are hungry brutes, and without dogs he could neither go to the ice-edge nor fetch fire-

wood; it would mean no boots and clothing, no frozen meat, no blubber, no lamp oil; it would, in a word, mean absolute destitution of just those things that an Eskimo needs the most.

I remember the first day that he left his bed, for I went into the hut and found him sitting on a box, propped against the wall; his wife was quietly crying over a pair of boots that the missionary had given her to make, and the children were sitting as quiet as mice upon the floor. Mêlê was the most cheerful of all. "Illa," he said; "God has given me back my health, and for that I am thankful."

"And what will you do now, Mêlê?"

"Atsuk; I shall trust my Father—I can do nothing else."

I thought that his simple expression of faith was admirable, and it was with a queer lump in my throat that I turned and left the poor contented fellow. I could not help thinking that few folks, however well-to-do, are blessed with so much peace of mind.

The hand of God, I think, is strangely near to these simple nature peoples—for so it seemed in Mêlê's case. On New Year's Eve he took his first walk out of doors, and, being a practical-minded man, he thought to turn his walk to good account by shouldering his fox-trap. He slowly made his way to the nearest trapping-place, a piece of broken ground dotted with stunted trees, and hidden behind the hills, and there he set and baited his trap. He walked home again, and peacefully went to sleep on his hard bed of boards and reindeer skins.

On the next afternoon I went into Mêlê's hut to see how he was getting on, and was surprised to

find several of our great hunters gathered there discussing something. Mêlê himself was sitting on his box, with snow on his boots and his face red with the cold; he was evidently not long home from another expedition. He was crying silently. "What is the matter?" said I. "Tagga" (look there), said Gustaf, our greatest fur-trapper; "tagga," and pointed to the table. The group drew away and let me pass, and I saw at once the cause of the excitement; on the rough boards there lay a beautiful black fox. "Igvit (yours), Mêlê?" I asked him. "Ahaila," he sobbed. "I went to-day to my fox-trap, my poor little only fox-trap that I set yesterday and baited with a piece of the seal meat that Daniel sent us for dinner, and that was too much for us to finish; and there were many other men there setting their fox-traps"—"Illa, illa, we were there," said some of the men grouped in the hut—"and I set my little fox-trap by itself, and their fox-traps were all about, here and there among the trees. And to-day I went again to look at my trap, and behold, I have a black fox. Tattamnarmêk (it is wonderful): some of the other men had foxes, red foxes and white, but my trap only has a black one. Surely God put it there because I am the poorest man and need it the most. Nakomêk." And it was New Year's Day!

Could I wonder at the man's emotion? Could I help sharing the excitement of the other trappers at this stroke of what we in our enlightenment call "luck"? Mêlê and his family were supplied with enough and to spare; they could buy seal meat and dog's food and blubber and clothes, enough to last them the winter through. And I wish the story

could end there: but in fairness to my picture of the Eskimos it must not.

Mêlê was just like all the rest of them, improvident, open-handed, generous to a fault: and so, in his rejoicing, he called his friends and neighbours together, and feasted them and fed them, and celebrated the wonderful day, and of course before the winter was over Mêlê was a poor man again, living from hand to mouth and just earning enough to keep his family going—but I think that he will never forget how plenty came into his house and built up his health and spirits on that New Year's Day. It is a true story; and somewhere, I suppose, there is a wealthy lady wearing a lovely black fox fur, little thinking that it is Mêlê's New Year's Godsend!

It sometimes happens that the Eskimo catches a Tartar in his fox-trap, if the smell of the putrid bait of rank and rotten seal meat chances to attract a wandering wolverine. The powerful brute, finding itself fast, marches off with the trap, snarling and grumbling at the pain; and before the hunter can add it to his bag he has a weary trail through the woods, up and down, to and fro, following the blood-stained line of the trailing trap, and at the end of it all he has to face a sharp encounter with one of the most dangerous things a man can meet, a mad and furious wolverine. He is probably thankful to shoot the beast before it does him an injury—if he has a gun with him.

As a matter of fact, the men seldom go to their traps without their guns. It is not that they have danger or big game in their minds, but because there is always a chance of meeting a partridge (rock



Photo lent by Moravian Missions.

HOME FROM THE HUNT

The sledge has just arrived from the sealing place with a fair-sized seal upon it, and the people are collecting, as they always do, to inspect and to pass remarks. The man on the left is just home from his traps with a marten; he also will come in for a share of good-natured attention.



Photo lent by Moravian Missions.

WINTER FISHING

During March, when seals are rather scarce and the reindeer hunt has not begun, the Eskimos depend a good deal on the fish they catch under the ice. They have a marvellous knowledge of the haunts of the rock-cod, and walk miles to their favourite places.

ptarmigan) on the road, and a partridge, eaten raw and warm, is a real delicacy to Eskimo ways of thinking.

There is bigger game for those who seek it; I have heard the scufflings of a wolf among the dogs when we camped in a snow hut on the mountain pass, and I have known the drivers stop the sledge among the stunted trees on some desolate neck of land between the fiords, and have watched them peering at the spoor of a bear in the snow. "Tumingit" (his footprints), they say. "Old, no good."

It is remarkable how long one may live in Labrador without seeing any of these fur animals in the wild state; as for myself, the nearest I ever got to a bear was when Paulus came to me and said "Me kill a bear—you want some, eh?" and so for next day's dinner we had a roast haunch of black bear on the table, and found it excellent. There are black bears in plenty for those who have the time or the opportunity to go after them; as late as 1907, a party of officers from a visiting ship went up Nain Bay in a launch, and shot three fine bears in one afternoon.

The Eskimos themselves are always on the tracks of one sort of animal or another; hunting is their very life, and as the days of winter went by, and the excitement of sealing at the sinâ and trapping in the woods began to wane, I was not surprised that there was something else to occupy their thoughts. "Tuktu" began to be the burden of their talk from morning till night.

The men stood chattering in groups; the women indoors were sewing and mending from dawn to sunset and sometimes far into the night; "Tuktu, tuktu, tuktu," was in everybody's mouth—the rein-

deer hunt was coming. Presently the word went round that the Nautsertortut (scouts) were out, and the excitement became intense. This was early in March, and all day long the people were going in twos and threes to the top of the nearest hill, to watch the sledge track for the home-coming of the scouts. Custom has fixed Easter Tuesday as the day for the beginning of the hunt, and although the custom is a comparatively new one, introduced to give the hunters the opportunity of attending the special services in the church during the Passion Week, it is very loyally observed: no Eskimo would dream of cutting the services to go a-hunting, but so eager are they to have everything ready, and so full are they of the all-important subject of the reindeer, that before Easter comes several of the men will certainly go to spy out the land and to bring back reports of the probable whereabouts of the deer. This is especially the case when Easter falls late; and when I missed this or that familiar face about the village and asked "Jonase nannekâ?" I was able to anticipate the answer, "Nautsertorpok" (he has gone to scout). The scouts seldom bring home any venison; they have done their part if they bring home a report, such as "I saw no reindeer yet," or "I have seen tracks, kannitomêkôrput" (they seem to be near); or, best of all, "I saw three deer in the distance, sivorliôjut (the leaders) probably." Then the excitement bubbles over into energy. Men stand grouped round sledges on the snow, planing and smoothing and polishing the runners, binding up slack joints and patching weak places with iron plates; harpoons are shoved among the rafters of the roof, and kajaks are hoisted on poles, out of reach of

the prowling dogs; women are stitching as if for dear life, getting the boots and clothing ready for the great occasion; there is stir and bustle all day long.

To my mind the most interesting of all these preparations is the mending of the guns. I had seen them at this odd occupation many times before I discovered what they were about.

A man wanders out of his hut with a gun upon his shoulder and a cluster of friends at his heels. He sits down upon a lump of ice, and some lad or other hurries off to set a mark on one of the hummocks, fifty or sixty yards away. Then the firing begins, and after each shot there is a hubbub of voices, and the gun is passed from hand to hand. Perhaps some famous hunter tries a shot, and delivers a slow and weighty opinion, whereupon the voices start jabbering again. When he thinks the trial has been sufficient to assure him of the weaknesses of his weapon, the owner of the gun hammers the barrel with a stone and tries another shot. It is not likely that one hammering will satisfy him; perhaps he has "straightened" it a little too much, and must give it a few thumps on the other side: he smacks away at it with his stone, and cocks his eye along it and hammers again, and tries another shot; and so the performance goes on, to the accompaniment of serious and critical remarks, until the gun is "mended." It matters not the least what sort of a gun it be; a new and costly rifle gets just the same treatment as the veriest old blunderbuss with its stock bound round with twine: whatever the gun, the barrel must be made to accord with Eskimo ideas of straightness; and the queer thing is that the owner of the gun,

once it is properly "mended," can shoot with the most deadly aim. It seems to suit him the better for the hammering it gets. It is no easy matter to get a sight of this curious performance, because as soon as a European comes walking along the hammering stops, and nothing more than mere gun practice seems to be going on. The Eskimos are rather shy of their characteristic little ways; and, of course, to European eyes the gun was good enough to begin with, and the hammering might easily be a laughing matter. As the days passed on towards Easter, and every day I saw the same gun-practice, and gun-cleaning, and cartridge-filling, I was surprised that there were no accidents; the people seem so careless of their fire-arms that any one might well expect to hear of several fatalities every year. But as I look back over the eight years that I have known the Eskimos, I can count the gun accidents on the fingers of one hand, and I only know of one that ended fatally. The fact is that their carelessness is more seeming than real, though they do run the most foolish risks at times.

While an Eskimo is engaged on the cleaning of his gun it is quite a likely thing for the wad to stick. The man pokes a plug of greasy tow into the barrel, and the harder he pokes the tighter it wedges. Perhaps he remembers to put the ramrod in at the other end of the barrel, and push the wad out the way it went in; perhaps he heats it red hot and makes it burn its way through; but as likely as not, especially if he is an inexperienced young fellow, he loses patience, and loads his gun and tries to fire the obstruction out. I knew a man at Hebron who tried this dodge. The wad was too tightly jammed

even to be shifted by a bullet, and the effect of the tremendous force was to raise a big blister on the barrel! Happily the steel was too tough to explode, or that adventurous young Eskimo would have been wiped out. He came running to the missionary, brandishing his blistered gun. "No good," he said, "can't shoot with this gun any more—please cut him short." So the missionary filed the barrel off behind the blister, and thus the gun became a sort of exaggerated pistol; and the proud and smiling owner was in time for the reindeer hunt, and did well.

So much for gun accidents; but I must confess that, rare as mishaps are, I used to watch the annual gun-tinkering with a good deal of anxiety for the safety of my apparently venturesome Eskimo neighbours.

All this is a prelude to the reindeer hunt; and at last the great day comes, and with shoutings and cracking of whips the sledges are away in the dark of the morning, and the hunters have started. I have watched them off in the gathering light, stern-faced and eager, each man to his own sledge, and mostly alone. A boy of thirteen is handy with a gun, and useful to take care of the dogs; but smaller folk must stay at home, beseech they never so prettily. The reindeer hunt is no time for useless weight upon the sledge: I knew a man who took his wife with him, but the lady had to walk the seventy or eighty miles home, trailing laboriously beside the sledge, because there was such a load of meat and skins that the dogs could pull no more; and up the hills she tasted the realities of the reputed third-class passage of the old English coaching days—"Get off and shove."

THE REINDEER HUNT

On Easter Tuesday morning the sledges make their start, and track westward up the frozen rivers and through the winding valleys to the moss-covered wilderness where the reindeer find their food. The hunters have no luggage on their sledges: no tent, no sleeping gear, only a scrap of dried seal meat or fish for themselves and the dogs, and a gun, an axe, a knife, a packet of sticking plaster for the inevitable cuts, and a tin of grease for their sunburnt lips and cheeks—that is their whole equipment, with the occasional addition of a kettle for the making of a cup of Eskimo tea, weak as water, and flavoured with a mouthful of molasses out of a bottle.

They start together, but after a while they get separated, and travel in ones and twos, or alone. This man's dogs are slow, and lag behind; the other man wants to try such and such a valley instead of the beaten trail; and so they separate.

When night comes they build snow huts for shelter, and sleep on a bed of dogs' harness spread on the hard snow floor—not for any great comfort there is in it, but because if they left it outside the dogs would devour it in the night. In the morning each man boils his own tea and munches his own solitary feed of dried meat or ship's biscuits, harnesses his team, and drives on alone. Alone he travels where his fancy leads him: he will find the deer. Solitude has no terrors for the Eskimo; it wakens his best instincts; it matters not that he meets nobody, sees nobody; alone he finds his way to the hunt and back again, trusting to his marvellous memory for landmarks, and guided by the stars and the sunrise.

It was a bleak, raw morning when I first saw the reindeer hunters start: they had their skin clothes

tied round with scarves to keep the wind out, and they had their heads down as they faced the bleak gusts. Before ten o'clock a hurricane was raging, and I feared for the safety of the men. But they came back, with the storm roaring behind them; first Jerry, then Abia, then others in twos and threes, all with the same tale—"Ajornarpok (it is impossible), we must start again to-morrow." "Are you all safe?" I asked them; and Jerry counted them over on his fingers. "Yes," he said, "we are all here: all except Johannes." "And Johannes, where is he?" "Atsuk"—the laconic answer, so characteristic of the Eskimo—"I don't know." But I was anxious. "Unêt," they said—as if to say, "Just don't you bother your head about Johannes; you can't lose him, we all know that. He's safe enough."

Next day was stormy again, and there was no Johannes. I thought of search parties, but the people only smiled; and, when the weather cleared, off they went again with their dogs and their sledges, with never a word about the missing man. For ten days nothing happened; then the women waiting on the hill yelled "Kemmutsit, kemmutsit" (a sledge, a sledge), and I climbed the hill and saw a dot of a sledge and a tiny blur of dogs with an active little ant of a driver slipping slowly down from the woods at the mouth of the big river to the wood-cutters' track over the ice.

"Johannes, immakka," they said, and strolled down the hill to meet him. And Johannes it was, smiling and happy, and brown and well; proudly shoving at a sledge piled high with meat and skins, and shouting and cooing and chuckling to the toiling dogs.

Willing women tore the pile to pieces, and carried it into the hut; an army of small boys fought for the privilege of unharnessing the dogs—no doubt to the huge disgust of the poor dogs, that had to wait with what patience they could muster until the scuffling was finished, thankful at last to slink out of the way of the tumbling mob; and Johannes himself seized a great pile of antlers that had topped the load, and brought them over for me to choose a pair for myself. I looked at the happy little man; and there was a picture in my mind all the time of a solitary little fur-clad Eskimo driving a team of ten wolfish and hungry dogs into the very teeth of an Arctic storm. "Why did you not turn back with the others," I asked him. Johannes's eyes twinkled. "It is quite a long time since I slept in a snow house," he said, "so I built a snow house instead of turning back, and sat inside and listened to the storm. It was splendid. And now I am the first home with meat. I will go and fetch you a leg."

Year by year the same scenes come: the start on Easter Tuesday, the daily tramp of the women to the top of the look-out hill, the daily chatter over the work. Three days have passed. "Ah," say the women, "our men have found reindeer; if they had not they would have come home before this, for they have only three days' food. Nakomêk, soon we shall be tasting tuktuvinemik" (reindeer flesh). And the men! It is the time of their lives! How graphically they tell of the keen moment when they first see the deer. Cunning fellows, away they circle so as to come upon them from the lee side, and if they cannot see the herd, but only find tracks, they know how far away they are by the

freshness of the spoor. They turn their sledges upside down before they get within range, and make the team lie down; then the dogs are safe, for they cannot drag an upturned sledge. Woe betide the luckless hunter who lets his dogs get too close: away they go—no power can stop them—they are as keen as wolves to do a little hunting for themselves, and for the nonce they have become wolves again.

One man described to me how he came upon the deer suddenly. He was driving his dogs along a winding track, when, on rounding a bend, he found himself driving into the midst of a herd. "Kappianarmêk," he said, and waved his arms to picture his excitement. "No good, dogs no good, tuktu too close"—and there he was, wildly trying to make the most of what was a very fleeting opportunity in every sense of the term.

My neighbours liked to talk about the reindeer hunt. "Ah," they said, "it is fine to see the herd upon the hillsides, all grey and white like the snow upon the rocks. Yes, there are many tuktu: you may watch them all day, marching along the hills, more and more and always more, a great, great number. Ah, it is fine to watch them—but only Eskimo eyes can see them, because our eyes are made for hunting. There they graze, digging through the snow with their forefeet to get at the moss underneath. Often they dig through much snow, more than the height of a man; but they always find the moss, because they can smell it with their feet! It is fine to see them—and all the cows have their little calves beside them, and the old bull is keeping watch. When we shoot the cow, the little

calf will not go away; it stays close to its dead mother and noses her and cries. We 'shoo' it away, and make it run after the herd: but sometimes it will not go, and we must kill it too. That is no good; it has fine meat, and its skin is soft for clothes for the baby, but it is better to let it live and grow big for next year."

However much the seals may mean to the Eskimos, it always seemed to me that the reindeer hunt was the big event of the hunter's year. There never was such excitement as when the sledges were sighted—such roars of welcome, such a stampede over the ice, such a willing crowd to help with the groaning sledge. The dogs used to look behind them, wondering why the load was so light; they lifted up their noses and began to trot, and the sledge came lurching over the rough track among the hummocks and stopped with a jerk at the hunter's door. In a twinkling the housewife is choosing a side for chops, and within an hour the hut is packed with friends and relations and casual visitors, chewing with the utmost gusto at one of the greatest luxuries they know—the first of the reindeer meat.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SPRING FLITTING—SEAL-HUNTING AMONG THE FLOES—TENT LIFE—THE HUNTER'S RETURN

SOON after the home-coming of the last of the reindeer-hunters a new excitement began. Spring was in the air, though the mice and the little snow-buntings were the only living sign of it; the ice was beginning to crack, and the Eskimos were eager to get their spring flitting over while travelling was safe and easy. Labrador was beginning to wear its spring dress, which is another way of saying that the snow was melting and making the whole place slushy in the daytime, and the black rock was peeping through upon the hillsides. All this came about in the month of May, when the air was warm by day and the nights were short and chilly; and when, as the mornings passed, I discovered that one family after another had moved off in the small hours, I made up my mind that I would have a picture of the flitting. When I walked along the village in the evening there was a bustle of packing outside many of the houses, but at four in the morning, when I came out with my camera, there was nothing but a glimpse of the tail of a sledge as it careered round the bend out of the bay. I gathered that the people had been up most of the night, for when an Eskimo sets his mind on doing a thing there is very little rest for him until he has done it. During the day I came upon Jakobus polishing his sledge runners, a sure

deer hunt was coming. Presently the word went round that the Nautsertortut (scouts) were out, and the excitement became intense. This was early in March, and all day long the people were going in twos and threes to the top of the nearest hill, to watch the sledge track for the home-coming of the scouts. Custom has fixed Easter Tuesday as the day for the beginning of the hunt, and although the custom is a comparatively new one, introduced to give the hunters the opportunity of attending the special services in the church during the Passion Week, it is very loyally observed: no Eskimo would dream of cutting the services to go a-hunting, but so eager are they to have everything ready, and so full are they of the all-important subject of the reindeer, that before Easter comes several of the men will certainly go to spy out the land and to bring back reports of the probable whereabouts of the deer. This is especially the case when Easter falls late; and when I missed this or that familiar face about the village and asked "Jonase nannekâ?" I was able to anticipate the answer, "Nautsertorpok" (he has gone to scout). The scouts seldom bring home any venison; they have done their part if they bring home a report, such as "I saw no reindeer yet," or "I have seen tracks, kannitomêkôrput" (they seem to be near); or, best of all, "I saw three deer in the distance, sivorliôjut (the leaders) probably." Then the excitement bubbles over into energy. Men stand grouped round sledges on the snow, planing and smoothing and polishing the runners, binding up slack joints and patching weak places with iron plates; harpoons are shoved among the rafters of the roof, and kajaks are hoisted on poles, out of reach of

the prowling dogs; women are stitching as if for dear life, getting the boots and clothing ready for the great occasion; there is stir and bustle all day long.

To my mind the most interesting of all these preparations is the mending of the guns. I had seen them at this odd occupation many times before I discovered what they were about.

A man wanders out of his hut with a gun upon his shoulder and a cluster of friends at his heels. He sits down upon a lump of ice, and some lad or other hurries off to set a mark on one of the hummocks, fifty or sixty yards away. Then the firing begins, and after each shot there is a hubbub of voices, and the gun is passed from hand to hand. Perhaps some famous hunter tries a shot, and delivers a slow and weighty opinion, whereupon the voices start jabbering again. When he thinks the trial has been sufficient to assure him of the weaknesses of his weapon, the owner of the gun hammers the barrel with a stone and tries another shot. It is not likely that one hammering will satisfy him; perhaps he has "straightened" it a little too much, and must give it a few thumps on the other side: he smacks away at it with his stone, and cocks his eye along it and hammers again, and tries another shot; and so the performance goes on, to the accompaniment of serious and critical remarks, until the gun is "mended." It matters not the least what sort of a gun it be; a new and costly rifle gets just the same treatment as the veriest old blunderbuss with its stock bound round with twine: whatever the gun, the barrel must be made to accord with Eskimo ideas of straightness; and the queer thing is that the owner of the gun,

once it is properly "mended," can shoot with the most deadly aim. It seems to suit him the better for the hammering it gets. It is no easy matter to get a sight of this curious performance, because as soon as a European comes walking along the hammering stops, and nothing more than mere gun practice seems to be going on. The Eskimos are rather shy of their characteristic little ways; and, of course, to European eyes the gun was good enough to begin with, and the hammering might easily be a laughing matter. As the days passed on towards Easter, and every day I saw the same gun-practice, and gun-cleaning, and cartridge-filling, I was surprised that there were no accidents; the people seem so careless of their fire-arms that any one might well expect to hear of several fatalities every year. But as I look back over the eight years that I have known the Eskimos, I can count the gun accidents on the fingers of one hand, and I only know of one that ended fatally. The fact is that their carelessness is more seeming than real, though they do run the most foolish risks at times.

While an Eskimo is engaged on the cleaning of his gun it is quite a likely thing for the wad to stick. The man pokes a plug of greasy tow into the barrel, and the harder he pokes the tighter it wedges. Perhaps he remembers to put the ramrod in at the other end of the barrel, and push the wad out the way it went in; perhaps he heats it red hot and makes it burn its way through; but as likely as not, especially if he is an inexperienced young fellow, he loses patience, and loads his gun and tries to fire the obstruction out. I knew a man at Hebron who tried this dodge. The wad was too tightly jammed

even to be shifted by a bullet, and the effect of the tremendous force was to raise a big blister on the barrel! Happily the steel was too tough to explode, or that adventurous young Eskimo would have been wiped out. He came running to the missionary, brandishing his blistered gun. "No good," he said, "can't shoot with this gun any more—please cut him short." So the missionary filed the barrel off behind the blister, and thus the gun became a sort of exaggerated pistol; and the proud and smiling owner was in time for the reindeer hunt, and did well.

So much for gun accidents; but I must confess that, rare as mishaps are, I used to watch the annual gun-tinkering with a good deal of anxiety for the safety of my apparently venturesome Eskimo neighbours.

All this is a prelude to the reindeer hunt; and at last the great day comes, and with shoutings and cracking of whips the sledges are away in the dark of the morning, and the hunters have started. I have watched them off in the gathering light, stern-faced and eager, each man to his own sledge, and mostly alone. A boy of thirteen is handy with a gun, and useful to take care of the dogs; but smaller folk must stay at home, beseech they never so prettily. The reindeer hunt is no time for useless weight upon the sledge: I knew a man who took his wife with him, but the lady had to walk the seventy or eighty miles home, trailing laboriously beside the sledge, because there was such a load of meat and skins that the dogs could pull no more; and up the hills she tasted the realities of the reputed third-class passage of the old English coaching days—"Get off and shove."

On Easter Tuesday morning the sledges make their start, and track westward up the frozen rivers and through the winding valleys to the moss-covered wilderness where the reindeer find their food. The hunters have no luggage on their sledges: no tent, no sleeping gear, only a scrap of dried seal meat or fish for themselves and the dogs, and a gun, an axe, a knife, a packet of sticking plaster for the inevitable cuts, and a tin of grease for their sunburnt lips and cheeks—that is their whole equipment, with the occasional addition of a kettle for the making of a cup of Eskimo tea, weak as water, and flavoured with a mouthful of molasses out of a bottle.

They start together, but after a while they get separated, and travel in ones and twos, or alone. This man's dogs are slow, and lag behind; the other man wants to try such and such a valley instead of the beaten trail; and so they separate.

When night comes they build snow huts for shelter, and sleep on a bed of dogs' harness spread on the hard snow floor—not for any great comfort there is in it, but because if they left it outside the dogs would devour it in the night. In the morning each man boils his own tea and munches his own solitary feed of dried meat or ship's biscuits, harnesses his team, and drives on alone. Alone he travels where his fancy leads him: he will find the deer. Solitude has no terrors for the Eskimo; it wakens his best instincts; it matters not that he meets nobody, sees nobody; alone he finds his way to the hunt and back again, trusting to his marvellous memory for landmarks, and guided by the stars and the sunrise.

It was a bleak, raw morning when I first saw the reindeer hunters start: they had their skin clothes

tied round with scarves to keep the wind out, and they had their heads down as they faced the bleak gusts. Before ten o'clock a hurricane was raging, and I feared for the safety of the men. But they came back, with the storm roaring behind them; first Jerry, then Abia, then others in twos and threes, all with the same tale—"Ajornarpok (it is impossible), we must start again to-morrow." "Are you all safe?" I asked them; and Jerry counted them over on his fingers. "Yes," he said, "we are all here: all except Johannes." "And Johannes, where is he?" "Atsuk"—the laconic answer, so characteristic of the Eskimo—"I don't know." But I was anxious. "Unêt," they said—as if to say, "Just don't you bother your head about Johannes; you can't lose him, we all know that. He's safe enough."

Next day was stormy again, and there was no Johannes. I thought of search parties, but the people only smiled; and, when the weather cleared, off they went again with their dogs and their sledges, with never a word about the missing man. For ten days nothing happened; then the women waiting on the hill yelled "Kemmutsit, kemmutsit" (a sledge, a sledge), and I climbed the hill and saw a dot of a sledge and a tiny blur of dogs with an active little ant of a driver slipping slowly down from the woods at the mouth of the big river to the wood-cutters' track over the ice.

"Johannes, immakka," they said, and strolled down the hill to meet him. And Johannes it was, smiling and happy, and brown and well; proudly shoving at a sledge piled high with meat and skins, and shouting and cooing and chuckling to the toiling dogs.

flitters chase the seals among the floating ice-pans. Boats and kajaks are the order of the hunt, and speed is the great thing needed, because the seals have lost their winter coat of fat, and sink as soon as they are dead. A wounded seal dives, or, if too hard hit to dive, floats, flapping its flippers, on the surface; a dead seal sinks, and because he does not want to lose it, the hunter who uses a gun makes a frantic dash for the place where the seal showed itself, paddling or rowing his hardest as soon as his shot is fired. The men, and boys too, for that matter, are complete masters of their kajaks, wonderfully speedy and remarkably safe, but they are not so versed in what I might call acrobatic kajaking as the Greenland Eskimos. Nothing delighted my Okak neighbours better than to be told about the Karâlit (Greenlanders); they listened open-mouthed to any news of these Innuit over the water. and feasted their eyes on the photographs of the fleets of short kajaks or of the people in their quaint costumes; they stared with wonder when they heard how the Greenlanders can turn themselves and their kajaks right side up if they happen to upset, for the Labrador men have forgotten how to do that.

Most of the men prefer guns to harpoons for the spring hunting, and take their stand in a small boat with a boy as oarsman; the boy's duty is to steady the boat on the water, and then to ply his oars with all his might as soon as the shot is fired; and I have watched the boats drifting aimlessly among the floes, the man with gun poised ready, the boy with oars upon the water, letting the boat turn idly round and round because of the impossibility of knowing where a seal's head might pop up. It must be exasperating

to a man to see the head come up and gaze and sink, all in a moment, in an unexpected quarter, so that he has hardly time to train his gun upon it; but, however aggravating the seals may be, an Eskimo does not lose his temper over his hunting; and as for swearing—why, the Eskimo language contains no oaths, and the few mild remarks that an Eskimo can make in his own tongue, such as "Kappianarmêk" (how dreadful), or "Ai-ai-kulluk" (that miserable thing), he makes where they can be applied literally. Useless expletives are as foreign to his nature as they are to his vocabulary.

Not all the families that flit in the springtime go seal-hunting among the breaking ice. There are some whose thoughts turn to the trout that have spent the winter in the ponds among the hills, and that are waking from their lethargy for the spring run to the sea; and so a good many of the sledges are piled high with nets amid all the other luggage, and the drivers turn the dogs' noses west instead of eastward when the sledges reach the mouth of the bay. As far as money goes, trout-fishing is a more paying game than seal-hunting; it is always fairly certain, and salt trout fetches a good price at the store.

The favourite way is to spread nets in the shallow water where the big rivers run into the sea, and clear them after every tide.

Clearing the nets sounds a small thing, but it means more than just taking out the great wriggling fish; if a man wants to have a good haul every time, he needs to clear away every fragment of weed, and that will take him the best part of the day. Floating pieces of ice must be towed to a safe distance, and

rents in the net must be mended; and, with one thing and another, the men are busy enough, and are quite willing to leave the women to split and salt the trout. Some of the families are splendid fisher-folk; one little man calmly answered "Forty barrels" when I asked him how many trout he generally managed to get in a season.

I had a little trout net of my own in Okak Bay, just opposite the hospital, and I could often see by the commotion in the water whether there were any fish in the net. I usually did the fisherman's work myself—when there were only a few fish. But if a strong tide came and brought twenty or thirty fish, my hands refused to do it; after half-an-hour's dabbling in the icy water my fingers were numb and my wrists used to ache with the cold, and I had to call an Eskimo boy to finish the job. Eskimo hands are made for cold work; ice and water are very ordinary things for them to touch—and, once again, I cannot but feel that the Eskimo is the very man for the Labrador life.

The village seemed very desolate while the people were away at their trouting and sealing places; there were only the workpeople about the store and Mission premises to give the place a touch of life; and during the daytime, while they were all at work, it seemed like some deserted village of a bygone generation. The windows were boarded up, doors were locked or fastened with tags of rope, and only the savage mother-dogs, that nursed their broods of puppies under the doorsteps, witnessed to the fact that these huts, looking so tumble-down now that the snow had melted away from them and had washed the packing of moss out of the crevices, were, after all,



THE BREAKING ICE

Okak towards the end of June, when the ice is breaking up and floating on the tides. It is unsafe for sledge travelling. The village is deserted; the families have all gone to their sealing camps, and will push their way home by boat as soon as the way is open.

the homes of families of hunters who were plying their craft in their acccustomed way, and who would return when winter came again and turn them once more into homes.

After the last of the spring flitters had gone a change came over the ice on the bay. Cracks and pools appeared, scraps of wood along the sledge track sank into the ice by the warmth they absorbed from the sun, and dotted the path with holes; the cracks grew and multiplied and met, the tides oozed upon the beach and the stones began to show, until, slowly and quietly, the great stretch of ice changed from a floating sheet to a close-packed mass of floating pieces. The tides shuffled them and spread them; and, by the last week in June, we were only waiting for a strong west wind to carry the ice away to the open ocean and set us a-talking of summer. As I took one of my walks through the silent village early in the July of 1904, enjoying all the new exhilaration of open water (for the ice had floated off the day before and made us feel that we were at last living by the seaside again), I heard a sudden shout. A babel of shrill voices was rising from the blubber yard, where the women were chopping up blubber for the steeping-tanks; and as I turned to pick my way along the sloppy path, all criss-crossed and channelled by scores of tiny rivulets that trickled from the melting snow on the hillside, I fell in with a rushing procession of children and dogs all making for the landing-place. The jetty in front of the Mission house looked busy; it was crowded with workpeople, all yelling "Umiat" (a boat) at the top of their voices. The blubber-women had left their greasy task, and were there in all the realism of oil-

sodden sackcloth overalls; the two old widows who had been digging in the garden had flung down their spades and were running as fast as their old legs would carry them; the cooper had dropped his tools and left his shop to join in the excitement; the chimney-sweep, black and grimy, was scrambling down from the roof, bursting to tell what he had seen from his perch; the missionary had his head out of window, with a telescope to his eye, trying to make out what was coming; everybody was shouting and jabbering and laughing. We are a strange folk in Labrador; ours is a quiet, humdrum sort of life, for the most part, and we get into the habit of making a great to-do about the little varieties that come our way.

After all, this cry of "A boat" only meant that one of the hunters was coming home; but it was the first boat of the season, and that made all the difference. The chimney-sweep had seen it first, and had given a shout that roused the blubber-women in the yard below; and so the commotion began. Soon I saw the boat for myself, a small brown speck on the water, near the southern point of the mouth of the bay. "Two masts," said the chimney-sweep: to my eyes the thing was only a brown dot. "Three people at the oars," said a voice, "and a woman sitting in the bows." "Yes, yes (chorus), a woman in the bows." "Jonasekut, immakka" (probably Jonas's people), said the cooper. "Illale" (of course), chorussed the others, "it must be Jonas and his two boys at the oars, and Priscilla in the bows."

Then there was quiet for a few minutes, while the brown dot grew steadily larger. At last it turned to

tack and I saw the two masts and the four people. "Illa, illa," cried a shrill old voice, "it is Jonasekut; see that white patch on the sail; I helped Priscilla to sew that on." "Boat seems loaded," said the cooper; "plenty seals, maybe." "Nakomêk" (how thankful), said the chorus; and so the excited talk went on until the boat, with a last long tack, swept gently alongside the jetty. "Jonase-ai," was the greeting—a sort of familiar "Hello, Jonas." "Ah," said Jonas, "Aksuse"; and he began to hand out the meat. His giving seemed quite indiscriminate, and everybody got a share. Children ran home, chattering and laughing with glee, carrying between them great slabs of raw flesh, with a train of dogs slinking furtively behind them in hopes of an accidental share; older folks followed more sedately, hugging bowls and tubs of meat, but all with the same delighted grin upon their faces in anticipation of that most luscious of all Eskimo dainties, fresh-killed seal.

I really wondered, as I watched the scene, whether the hunter had anything left for himself. He had, but no more than enough for a good square meal; he was quite content to follow the generous custom of the people, and share with all and sundry; and the skin and blubber were his only payment for his trouble and skill. He carried the liver to the missionary, and as I watched him I thought that in his open-handed giving there was just the same spirit that prompted little John to open the circle at the dinner bowl to the poor young man.

This home-coming was the first of many, since the open water gave the people the means of travelling for which they had been waiting; one day it was a seal-hunter, another a trout-fisher from the

mouth of the big river, and every time there was the same shout, the same eager stampede, the same chatter of anticipation, the same trot home with great hunks of meat or bunches of silvery fish, and the same big gipsy-pots bubbling over the open-air fires and promising a splendid feast for everybody.

CHAPTER XX

COD-FISHING—TENTS—A POLAR BEAR—MOSQUITOES—BUILDING

THE spring seal hunt brings the Eskimo hunting year to a close; with no furs to trap, no seals to spear, no reindeer to chase, the Labrador summer would find the hunter a disconsolate being were it not for the cod-fishing.

This is the great thing that makes the months of August and September the busiest in the whole year. Day in and day out the boats are on the water, with men and boys sitting in them fishing from morning till night—aye, and all night long if fish are plentiful. It is a big test of Eskimo patience, to jerk the bright leaden lure, with its two barbed hooks, up and down within a few feet of the bottom of the sea; jerk, jerk, jerk, hour after hour, when fish are rather scarce and only the plodder can hope to succeed; but there come times when the fish are so plentiful that they are on the hook before it is well sunk, and there is a spice of excitement in hauling up as fast as your hands can pull, and dropping the hook again for more and more and more. But in spite of the excitement, "jigging," as it is called among the fishermen, is horribly cold work on dull, bleak days, and I was not surprised to find the Eskimos wearing gloves of seal leather on their plump hands to prevent the line from chafing them. In ordinary times the men and boys do the fishing, and leave the women and girls to attend to the splitting and salting, but

when they light upon one of the vast shoals of fish that seem to swarm from place to place, the whole family goes out in the boat, and the baby in the mothers' hood is the only one that seems too small to ply the jigger, and tiny children somehow manage, with much struggle and determination, to land fish almost as big as themselves.

The quantity of codfish is astonishing; they must literally teem in countless myriads along the coast; for year after year not only the Eskimos, but hundreds of schooner crews from Newfoundland, gather them by barrelfuls—I might say tons—and year after year the fish are there, seemingly as plentiful as ever. It is a fine living, the cod-fishing; the people look to it for their main supply of those things that money can buy, and a good season may not only pay the debts which a man has made at the store during the winter and spring, but give him new tools, a new gun, a harmonium, or even a sofa for his house.

Though the drying of the fish is a thing that they have had to learn, they put every bit as much care into it as they do into all the hunting which is natural to them; and I have been amused to see how they scurry when a sudden shower of rain comes and threatens to damp the half-dry fish that lies upon the rocks.

This is the time when the ships and the visitors come to Labrador; the time when the cod-fishing is in full swing, and when, as a visitor once said to me, "The whole place smells of fish"; the time when the Eskimos live scattered along the shores of the bays and runs. There are a few little huts and iglos still to be seen, where families have found a good



TENT LIFE

Lizetta and her family at their summer fishing place. This is the summer life, and these are Eskimos as the summer visitor sees them, clad in a semi-European dress, and spending every possible moment fishing.

fishing-place and return to it year after year; but most of the people live in tents. Tents are ideal summer dwellings for a people who are, at heart, wanderers; and the Eskimos are restless beings—they like to follow the call of their hunting, and to make their temporary home where their work is. Not many years ago the tents, all along the coast, were of reindeer skins stitched together with sinew and stretched on poles with the hairy side outward; and no doubt some of the people will live in skin tents to the end, so loth are they to give up the customs of their lives.

But calico tents are becoming very popular—and a good thing, too. They are lighter and airier than skin tents, and afford just as good a protection from the weather; but the Eskimos like them because they are so easily mended. If an August storm tears a tent to ribbons or hurls it bodily into the raging sea, the owner and his family have no need to spend the rest of the season packed like sardines on the floor of some other man's tent, waiting for the next year's reindeer hunt to come round before making a bid for a new one; no, when the storm has passed, the father takes his boat and hies him to the store, and spends a few dollars of his fish-money on a roll of calico which his wife will very speedily turn into a tent.

But even this is not the chief reason to Eskimo minds. Portability is the thing; and a tent that packs up into a neat little bundle, and can be stowed away in the bottom of a boat or can be used to cover the load on a sledge without making the pile too high and top-heavy for the passengers, is a grand thing compared with the bulky heap of reindeer skin

that takes up so much room. Another reason that has struck me in favour of the calico tent is that calico is not particularly tempting to the appetite of the dogs. I can well imagine that a tent of dried reindeer skins might prove quite a toothsome meal for a pack of famished sledge dogs; but I have never heard of them devouring a calico tent wholesale, though they are not averse to an occasional chew at the oil-sodden margins.

And so the Eskimos spend their summer, dwelling in tents, fishing and drying their catch upon the rocks, until by the end of September the main rush of the codfish is over, and the people make their way home again to the Mission villages, bringing their fish bundled ready for the *Harmony* to take it to market.

In the old days, I suppose, before there was a market for their fish, the people did as I found them doing at Killinek—they hunted the seals and the white bears. But the seals are gone northward; they have learnt better than to stay about the villages of the Eskimos, and nowadays do no more than pass them by in the autumn and the spring. As for the white bears, a stray one sometimes comes along the coast with the ice, and becomes the centre of a furious hunt and the cause of a great deal of chattering about "nennok" (white bear) over the pipes in the evening; but the most of the nennoks have retreated to the Button Islands and other desolate spots where there is no smell of man to disturb them.

A beady-eyed little Eskimo came into my room one evening, hugging a bulky package which he dumped upon the floor.

"Nennok," he explained, "half of him: you buy him, eh?"

He unrolled his package and named his price, and I found myself examining the hinder part of a big bearskin.

"Where is the rest of him?" I asked; and then I got the story.

It appears that this man and another were out in a little boat, jigging for codfish, when they saw a white bear swimming in the sea. Like true Eskimos they fell to their oars, and got the boat between the bear and the shore, so as to head him off. They had no gun to shoot him, but this was a secondary consideration; the great idea was that they were within hunting distance of a nennok, and hunt him they would. They chased him to and fro until he began to tire, and then they assailed him with their oars, hammering prodigiously at his head. He tried to get into the boat, and at that they hammered the more, until they had him stunned and helpless. Then they towed his carcase ashore, and set about sharing him.

It did not happen to strike them that they might sell the skin and divide the money, and so reap a reasonable reward for their adventure; no, they cut the bear in two, and each appropriated an end. They were disgusted to find that they had entirely spoilt the market value of the skin: no trader wanted half a bear!

That was the only polar bear that visited Okak during my five years there; and I have that piece of bearskin to-day to remind me of the marvellous pluck of those two Eskimos, who attacked a polar bear with no better weapons than their oars.

MOSQUITOES

Though the summer may sound a very tame time from a hunter's point of view, there is one occupation that keeps everybody busy. I mean, fighting the mosquitoes.

From the beginning of July to the end of August, and even later, the summer air of Labrador swarms with countless hosts of bloodthirsty gnats. The supply is unlimited.

Mosquitoes, we call them; and rightly, I suppose, for their scientific name is Culex; and they live fully up to the evil repute that their family has for biting and stinging and buzzing and swarming around. How, thought I, can one be expected to enjoy this lovely scenery, these otherwise delightful walks among the hills, if one is compelled to be encased in a gauze veil and a pair of thick gloves? The buzzing creatures perch on the meshes of your veil, and you can see them striving to get through; if you have not adopted Eskimo boots, which reach up to your knees, they climb about your knitted socks, and sit there, biting your ankles between the strands of wool, and you can almost imagine them kicking their heels with delight at the convenience of having something to stand on while they ply their nefarious trade.

There is a hideous fascination about watching the mosquitoes: you may slap and dance, but however many you may kill there are always plenty waiting their turn, and the only satisfaction you get is in the knowledge that new-comers receive an extra share of their attentions, and that some day you will be hardened. The first bites may produce really alarming results. I am sure that I took all due precautions, the first night that I slept on shore

in Labrador, but a mosquito must have crawled under my door in the darkness, for in the morning I could only open one eye, and the question that greeted me at the breakfast table was, "Have you bumped yourself?" The first summer is a sort of inoculation time; afterwards the bites do not sting and itch so badly as the first ones did, and you do not notice the attentions of the gnats nearly so much. Some of the oldest residents seem quite hardened or bite-proof, or perhaps they are too highly flavoured with tobacco. This last holds good for the Eskimos: they light their pipes and go about their work, perhaps with a handkerchief over their necks, perhaps without, while the mosquitoes buzz about and try to dodge the smoke.

I used to find a veil rather a trying and "head-achey" thing, and spent a good deal of thought in an attempt to devise some other method of protection, but without much success. Measures which act very well with the milder kind of flies are quite useless with our ravenous Labrador mosquitoes.

One adventure that I had in my search for a gnat-cure may be worth recording. It happened to be church-cleaning time. The church was in the hands of a bevy of muscular Christians in the form of Eskimo women, and as the weather was fine the missionary decided to hold service out of doors. Would I give the people an address? It was a charming day towards the end of July, one of those calm days when Labrador seems at its best; but, as is their habit on a warm day, the mosquitoes were holding carnival. My listeners were all busy fly-flapping; but a man who essays to deliver an address cannot be all the time whisking gnats off

his face, nor could I imagine myself talking from within the stifling folds of a brilliant green veil, so I sought advice. One good Samaritan in the company proffered a compound of his own concoction, which he firmly believed would frighten any ordinary mosquito yards away; so I willingly and gladly accepted the brown, gummy-looking stuff, and gave my hands and face a good plastering with it. Quite likely all the strength or virtue had long ago evaporated out of the compound, for it had little or no smell, and I realised afterwards, when it was too late, that I had converted myself for all practical purposes into an animated "fly-paper." For the first few minutes the mosquitoes seemed rather surprised; they buzzed round my face in an angry swarm, but hesitated to dip their trunks into the paint. At last a bold pioneer made a dash for my nose, and stuck fast. He hummed and buzzed and struggled for his life.

This was more than flesh and blood could stand; I tried to brush him off—and squashed him! That was bad enough; but worse was to follow, for either the gnats were on their mettle, determined to bite if they died for it, or else the tragic fate of their leader fired them to frenzy, for they bit and bit and bit; and by the end of the hour I had a fine swollen red face, shiny with treacle and all dotted with black—and somebody told me that I looked like a currant bun. That was the last trial I made of amateur compounds: since then I have confined myself to the "dopes" that are to be bought in the shops, and that are really of use.

I spent part of my first July in building the bridge over the stream that runs between Okak

Hospital and the church. On the whole my four workmen got on very well, though they usually wanted to do things in their own way, and got into some amusing predicaments in consequence. I once found them shaking their heads very seriously over a beam that would not fit. They tried it one way, and found it too long; then they laboriously heaved it round the other way, but it was still too long. They had shaped and notched the ends, ready to be dovetailed into place, but had forgotten to make the beam the right length first. What must they do? Measure it, cut a piece off one end, and shape the end again. "Ai, ai," they said, "kappê, what a lot of trouble." And then I stumbled over my first great difficulty with the Eskimo language. I rolled out a couple of long words, carefully compiled from the grammar book, but I really did not know whether I was saying "Measure your beams first, then notch them," or "Notch your beams first and then measure them"; and I thought it well to give a pantomimic demonstration, which I hope they understood. Anyhow, we built the bridge, and it looks all right to this day.

I was advised to get some painting done before the mosquitoes became too plentiful, so I set a party of workmen to paint the hospital as soon as the bridge was ready. The painting passed off pretty well, excepting that the dogs regarded our paint—made of seal-oil and whiting, boiled together—as a special sort of thick soup cooked for their benefit, and devoured as much of it, and as many of the paint-brushes, as they could get: they even licked the walls clean, as high as they could reach, after the workmen had gone home. On the whole

the workless dogs in the summer time are a nuisance, and it was partly on their account that I had to put railings round the hospital. The roomy porch was a haven of peace for them; they used to wait on the steps for the door to be opened, and then sneak in and snuggle down in the hope of passing unobserved. More than once they got beyond the inner door, and came slinking into the kitchen, snuffling and whistling at the smell of cookery; and then followed a nightmare chase, we shouting and stamping, they tearing round and round in a blind hunt for the way out. I sometimes dream about them yet; the din was awful: the great hulking things ran round and round, upsetting chairs and buckets, yelping and squealing, trying to hide in impossible corners and crannies behind the water tanks, getting more and more miserable and frightened, until at last they found the door and scrambled through it with terrified faces and drooping tails. By the time the painting was done the cod-fishing had commenced, and the men wanted to be off, so I let them all go but the two carpenters, staid and solid Eskimos both, and clever with their tools. The idea I had in my mind was to put up a series of posts, five feet and six inches high, fixed firmly to a long beam buried in the sand of the foundation; to these posts we could fix a number of hurdle-like railings, and have them removable so as to store them in the loft before the winter storms began. I fancy that the two carpenters were a trifle jealous of each other, for the younger man was the cleverer, and took the more responsible part of the work. I gave him instructions to make the posts five feet and six inches high, and he set to work amiably

enough. The other man asked my friend the missionary, who was acting as adviser and interpreter and general helper in difficulties, how high he should make them.

"Five feet, abvalo (and a half)," said the missionary.

That was the starting-point of quite an argument between the two Eskimos, and we found it necessary to explain with the aid of the foot-rule that the two things were the same. These men both knew perfectly well how many inches there are in a foot; but I have often thought, since then, that our two ways of putting it were not quite the same to Eskimo minds.

Oh, those railings! I can see in my mind's eye a row of tousled little heads, with bright little eyes all peering to see what mystery there was behind them; and I laugh when I think how those heads used to disappear if I tapped at the window, and leave nothing but a row of little knuckles clinging, until first one and then another mop of hair rose slowly to view when those bright little Eskimo laddies thought that the doctor had gone again.

CHAPTER XXI

Starting the Hospital—The Crowd and the Singing

AS the village was pretty well filled with people, and most of the actual building work was finished, I thought it a good plan to open the hospital without further delay, and so allow things to shape themselves before the busiest of the winter's bustle began.

The simplest plan would be, I thought, to have the opening announced to the people in church after one of the evening meetings, and the missionary kindly agreed to do this.

The wording seemed ordinary enough to my mind—

"To-morrow the doors of the hospital will be opened at nine o'clock in the morning"—

Put into literal Eskimo; but it must have been, in some way or other, too blunt, for the people were amazed beyond belief.

I see quite clearly that it would have been better to make a long speech of explanation, because the idea of a hospital was quite new to them; but I know the Eskimo and the working of his mind in a way that I did not at that time. The fact remains, that the people were mystified. I was called back into the church after the meeting, and found a rather excited congregation, all eager to speak at once.

"Why must the people come to hospital at nine o'clock?"

"Because it is a custom of all hospitals to fix some such hour."

"Then are the people of England always ill at nine o'clock in the morning? If I expected the Eskimos always to be ill at a fixed time there was no sense in it. The people must be ill whenever they wanted."

I tried to argue—"Certainly the door is open at all times for accidents and sudden sickness"—but it was useless: they had got the idea into their heads that some newfangled notion was being thrust upon them, and, in the natural conservatism of their minds, they resented it, just as they are inclined to resent all other innovations at first sight. The only possible thing to do, as I found all through my dealings with my simple-minded neighbours, was to keep to my word and let things shape themselves.

"Keep literally to what you say," said Mr. Simon: "any change of front makes the people suspicious."

I turned to the people: "Tava" (finished), said I, in my poor halting attempt at their language. "I shall say no more; the doors will be open at nine to-morrow"—and then I left them.

No doubt they went home and palavered the business half the night; and I was more than a trifle worried, it seemed such a hard reception for my cherished plans. But the missionary only smiled. "It will come out all right," he said.

In the morning there were three people waiting for the opening of the doors of the new out-patients' department, and I breathed freely again. It was all right: the people were my friends. That was the beginning; and morning by morning they came, with their plaints and their troubles and their

requests—odd and ludicrous and touching by turns. One of the very first visitors was old Maria, the village "character," a well-meaning old body, no doubt, amiable and friendly, but not over-endowed with reasoning powers. She gave a very characteristic hint of her idea of the functions of a hospital by asking for "eye-medicine," and rambling off immediately into a long explanation. "I have lost the cover of my pipe," she said, and between the words she stooped down and hitched a dingy and battered-looking tobacco-pipe out of the leg of her boot. "I have lost the cover of it," she repeated, "and the wind blows the smoke into my eyes and makes them smart. I want good medicine to cure that"! That word for "medicine" was one of the first of the many curiosities of the Eskimo language that I learnt. Their plan is to tack the ending "siumik" on to the name for any part of the body where they have pain, and so build up a word that means medicine for that particular pain. Maria's request was a simple one—ije-siumik (eye-medicine)—but some of the others were not so plain. I remember one square-shouldered little man, with a heavy mop of hair streaked with grey, who marched solemnly in and asked for "tooth-medicine." The offer of some toothache tincture caused him to shake his head resolutely. "Oukak" (no), he said, "kikkiamik piumavunga" (I want the iron sort), and down he sat, pointing a stubby finger at a huge molar. There was no mistaking his meaning, though it may seem queer "medicine"; and very soon he was ambling home with many smiles and mutterings of "Thankie" after the "iron sort of tooth medicine" had pulled out the offending tooth.

After that I thought it well to dig into the depths of the grammar book, and I found that "siut" or "siumik" literally means "something used for." That made it plain—"something used for toothache." As if to make things more interesting, within the next day or two I heard somebody talking about "Sontage-siumik," meaning his "Sunday clothes": but more was to follow, for a sledge driver came to ask if I had "silla-siumik" (weather medicine)! This was a puzzler; but the man's restless eyes, roaming over my walls, finally fixed their gaze on the barometer, and I discovered that he wanted to know what the "silla-siut" (thing used for the weather) had to say about to-morrow's weather prospects!

But it was not all humour at my nine o'clock hour: never a day passed without its touches of pathos, and sometimes of tragedy, too. The Eskimos are very brave when there is pain to be borne, and there are many instances of their endurance written in the books at Okak Hospital. I remember how old Rebekah came one day, nursing a wounded hand. She is one of the stateliest of the village grandmothers, an active old woman of sixty-five, with her teeth nearly worn to the gums; but, old as she is, she is well able to take an oar in a boat—or a pair, for the matter of that—and thinks nothing of trudging to and from the woods, five miles away, to fetch broken branches to replenish her stove. With proper Eskimo dignity she came in and sat down, and composed herself to tell her tale; and all the while she was hugging her left hand, swathed in a red bandanna handkerchief.

"I was making boots just now," she said, "and the leather-knife slipped and cut my thumb. Ai-ai, it bled very much, and it was nearly cut off; but I

had my boot-needle threaded with ivalo (reindeer sinew), and I sewed my thumb with that, so that it no longer bleeds; and now I have come to let you bind it up." And there and then the brave old woman unwrapped her handkerchief and displayed her hand, with a long wound neatly sewn up, stitch upon stitch, in proper bootmaker's style! And I think that the ending of the story is appropriate, for old Rebekah's vitality and power of repair proved as great as her fortitude.

This just serves to illustrate the native indifference to pain; and even in the worst of sufferings their attitude is the same. I have seen them, men and women, in dingy little huts and in leaky calico tents, lying on rough beds of moss and reindeer skins, silent and uncomplaining, though their faces were blanched and the beads of perspiration stood out under the strain of physical suffering. The very thought calls forth one's sympathy; and the pictures that crowd before me as I write—pictures of people toiling up the steps of the new hospital, with the marks of pain upon their faces and a dumb and eager hopefulness shining in their eyes—has left an impression on my mind that time will never efface. A strangely attractive folk: with children's fears and childhood's quaint ideas, and childhood's whims and fancies and unreasoning demands, but with a manly bravery in the face of pain or danger, and a manly mastery of the terrible rigours of their daily work, that call for admiration.

Before very long the people were well enough used to the working of a hospital to make the nine o'clock hour a busy one; and as I was slowly getting a grip on the more everyday parts of the Eskimo

language I thought it would be an excellent plan to start each day's work with morning prayers. I told the people so. "Nakomêk, nakomêk" (how thankful), they said, and nodded, and nudged one another in their appreciation of the idea. The word I happened to use—the morning singing—caught their fancy at once, for singing always appeals to them. A grim-faced deputation called upon me to know if it was true that there was going to be singing at nine o'clock. "Yes," said I. "Then the people want to know if they may come, even when they are not sick, just for the singing, and then go home again." "By all means, let them come and help with the singing;" and the deputation retired, smiling and nakomêk-ing.

"Now," thought I, "we are likely to have a crowd: what are we to do for benches?" I set a small boy to scour the village for the two worthies who shared the honourable and responsible position of public carpenter; and when, after a due interval, they arrived, having been discovered, without doubt, sharing a solid meal of fresh seal meat in some hunter's house, I took them into my plans. Peter and David, the worthy carpenters in question, nodded sagely and said "Taimak" (so be it); and we made our way to the attic. There we attacked the disused packing-cases, and knocked them to pieces and pulled the nails out, and planed the boards to a reasonable smoothness, and by dint of much measuring and sawing and hammering evolved a dozen very decent little benches out of the pile. No Mission hospital ever had cheaper furniture than our amateur benches; but they served their purpose, and, for all that I know to the contrary, they are doing duty at Okak Hospital to this day. On the advice of Peter and David we

made them nice and low, to suit the short Eskimo legs; and though we did not paint them they always looked spruce, for Sarah and Valeria, the two char-women, took no end of pride in scrubbing them. I was very well satisfied with the benches—because the people liked them.

As I expected, the room was packed to the utmost on the first day of the singing. There were seats for about fifty, and as "first come, first served" was the rule, the people began to come early. By a quarter to nine there was a crowd on the doorsteps—not an orderly queue, by any means, but a jolly-tempered mob, clinging to the railings and jostling to get nearer to the door, and constantly reinforced by new arrivals from all parts of the village. An avalanche of boisterous humanity surged in and nearly overwhelmed me when I opened the door upon the stroke of nine; but it was only a momentary boisterousness—at a word the avalanche changed to an orderly procession.

That is one of the many things I like about the Eskimos—they are staid and decorous in their natural demeanour, and so, when it does happen that their spirits bubble over and they begin to be noisy, they are easy to control.

The benches were full long before the stream of people had ceased, but the folks seemed determined to get in; those who could not find room on the benches squatted on the floor, and those who were unable even to nudge their way into squatting-room on the floor stayed in the passage or sat upon the stairs, and we left the door open for their benefit. It was amusing, but quite characteristic, to observe that the indefatigable old Maria had somehow



MARIA

One of the best known of the Okak Eskimos, and quite a character in her way. She is a typical Eskimo, with her square face and high cheeks, small eyes and black hair; typical, too, in her disposition, stolid, but good-humoured and friendly.



OKAK HOSPITAL

It contains six beds and three children's cots. The mission ship *Harmony* is in the bay. The wooden troughs on trestles convey water from the brook to the mission house and hospital. When the brook is frozen, water is ladled from beneath the ice on the big river, and brought in tanks on a dog-sledge.

managed to get the middle seat on the front row. Among the people on the floor between the benches I saw big Josef, the mightiest hunter (and therefore the richest man) in Okak; in heathen times he would have been a sort of king among the people, because he is both the tallest man and the best hunter among them; but he seemed quite happy on the floor.

We sang a well-known hymn, and the place shook with the delightful noise. I can see the picture as I write, and I think that of all my memories of life among the Eskimos the most inspiring is the memory of that crowd of faces, all wrinkling with pleasure and perspiring with the warmth—and the tremendous harmony that filled the room. I seem to hear the music now; the women's clear voices trilling out the tune, with the altos and tenors and basses blending admirably with them. Eskimos always sing well, and fall into the parts of the music unconsciously; their voices are sometimes harsh and gruff, but they are natural singers. Strange that they have no music of their own! Weird rhythmic chantings are all the music that the heathen Eskimo knows; but the soil is there in the people themselves, and music has taken root and flourished among them.

That was the first of many happy mornings; and though the novelty of the thing was a big attraction in the beginning, the people still came when the novelty had long since worn off, and morning by morning, when nine o'clock struck, our benches were packed with an eager crowd.

I soon found out what the people liked best; new hymns were the great attraction. Sometimes one or other of the missionaries would translate a fresh hymn, and I had a busy day printing it on the

little hand-press that some well-wisher had bequeathed to the hospital. Next morning a subdued buzz of delight would greet the distribution of the printed sheets. Once, I remember, I was too busy to print a new hymn, so I wrote the words on a blackboard and hung it up in full view. The result was just what I ought to have foreseen. When I went into the room for the meeting everybody was whispering, and all through the reading the whispering and muttering went on in a subdued sort of way; the people were spelling through the new hymn. I ought to have known that only a few of them can read without making the words; they need to whisper or speak, or at least shape their lips to the sound, before they get the meaning—they have not the faculty of seeing sounds as we can. There are exceptions; Jerry the organist and Juliana and Benjamin, the school teachers, can read by thought without any mouthing at all. But you can imagine that roomful of people, eagerly spelling their way through the words of the new hymn on the blackboard and paying not the least attention to anything else. The new hymn absorbed them.

I seldom found it necessary to play the tune over more than once; once they had heard it they sang it with a swing, unless it were a melody more dull and difficult than those to which most modern hymns are set.

There was a catastrophe at one of our nine o'clock meetings, in which one of our little benches played the leading part. When four good solid Eskimos were seated on each of them, the benches were well laden, and I used to feel some apprehension as I watched the people edging closer and closer

together to make room for "just one more." I felt sure that the last straw would be reached some day, but the people always said "Namatuinarput" (they are quite all right) when I expressed my fears. But the last straw came—and a very substantial last straw it was—in the person of big Tabea. She came in rather late one morning and stood looking round for a place with all the dignity and consequence of the prosperous middle-aged Eskimo matron. There were no empty seats, but a comfortable-looking party of village worthies made room—or an apology for room—for her in the middle of their well-filled bench. Tabea sat down ponderously and with deliberation; there was an ominous creaking and the bench collapsed with a clatter, heaping its occupants into a wild scrimmage on the floor. I could hardly keep my face straight when I saw them shove the broken bench aside and compose themselves upon the floor as gravely as you please.

If all this had happened out of doors they would have laughed, I have no doubt, but this was meeting-time, when folks do not laugh; and it speaks well for the gravity of the Eskimo character that the ludicrous spectacle of the collapsing bench and the struggling dignitaries on the floor did not even cause a titter.

Peter and David stayed behind after prayers, and sawed the unfortunate bench into strips, which they used to strengthen others that were beginning to look rather shaky about the legs; and I took the precaution of announcing a limit to the seating capacity of the benches for the future.

CHAPTER XXII

BEDS FOR THE HOSPITAL—ESKIMO PATIENTS—FEEDING THE SICK FOLKS

THE summer of 1904 saw the hospital finally launched in full going order, for among the many things that the *Harmony* brought were the bedsteads and bedding for the wards. I dare say the sight of so many long packing-cases awoke some speculation in the minds of the people, and perhaps our servant girl only voiced what was in the minds of many when she asked what they were.

She was a bright and active Eskimo girl of eighteen, rejoicing in the picturesque name of Veronica, and she touched my arm as the boxes came lumbering up the steps, and said "Hai, sunat ukkoa?"

"What are they, Veronica? why, these are the bedsteads."

"Bedsteads?"—this with a puzzled air.

"Ahaila, beds for the sick people."

"Sôgle (but why)?—there are no sick people: old Emilia is the only person in bed, and she is not sick, only old."

I tried to explain to her that these bedsteads were to be put into the wards in readiness for any possible sick persons during the future.

"Ai, ai," she said, "are there going to be sick people? Who will it be?"

I could not help feeling amused at the simplicity of her reasoning, it was so thoroughly Eskimo; but

I felt sure in my own mind that it was only Veronica's first thought, and that after a little deliberation and a few discussions in the houses she and all the rest of the people would see the sense in these beds.

I laughed at Veronica, and told her "Tukkisilârpotit" (you will understand), and with that she was content and went singing back to her work.

I sometimes wondered, as I worked with Peter and David at the laying of linoleum on the ward floors, and the fitting up of these bedsteads, how the Eskimos would take to the novelty of hospital treatment and hospital discipline.

It seemed rather a puzzle, for the more I saw of the Eskimos the more I knew them to be sticklers for their own customs and ways; and the more I talked to them the oftener I heard one or the other say, "We are different from the Kablunâks (Europeans)."

Before many days were past men were coming to say "So-and-so is ill: may we bring him to hospital?" and when, a few months later, the sea was frozen and travelling was possible from station to station over the ice, sledges began to come from Hebron and Nain, and even further, bringing sick and injured folks to occupy those beds.

The fortitude that some of these long-distance travellers displayed was simply marvellous. Young Jerry, at Hebron, when he stumbled among the dogs and got his leg smashed by the oncoming sledge, elected to ride the sixty rough miles to Okak stretched upon the hard floor of a travelling sledge. The lad was evidently profiting by his father's example, for he told me how, some time previously,

the old man had broken his leg in much the same way, and the neighbours had treated it in the real old Eskimo style. They propped the man on a rough wooden bedstead, and buried the broken limb under a pile of sods!

I gathered that the victim of this primitive method of setting a limb was very impatient: however that may be, the treatment was a failure, for the bone set crooked and the old man goes with a limp. So young Jerry came to hospital. His drivers, two fine young fellows, brought him along at a splendid pace.

There is no one more unselfish than an Eskimo bent on an errand of mercy. The dogs had enough to do to pull Jerry, so the drivers walked or ran to lighten the load and make the pace the faster. They only rode down the hill from Ittiplersoak (The Big Neck), where the track crosses the ridge that leads out to Cape Mugford, and on some smooth stretches on the ice towards Okak where the seal-fetchers had worn a glassy path: for the most of the way they trotted, with that high-stepping action of their short legs that is so characteristic of the Eskimos—and which, I verily believe, would bring them in ahead of the field in a Marathon race. When the sledge turned into our bay the people shouted "Arnak" (a woman), because there was a padded figure sitting on the sledge, with the two men running beside. None but a woman—or a Kablunâk—would sit on the sledge so padded, and the dogs were the people's dogs. But when the party came a little nearer their delight at the prospect of a visit from a Hebron family turned to alarm. "Arnaulungitok" (it is not a woman), they

said. "Aî-ai, kappê, it is a man: he sits still: he must be kannimajok" (a sick one).

Off they ran to help the sledge over the hummocks, and to make things as easy as possible for the poor fellow who sat there, anxious and weary, wedged tightly between two planks lashed on the sledge. This was in January, the coldest part of the winter.

As I helped the people to carry the sledge bodily into the hospital I asked young Jerry, "Are you very cold?"

"No," said he, simply. "I am wrapped in a reindeer skin—but the jolting, ai-ai, it has hurt my leg."

Another that I shall not easily forget was a man from Nain, who had even a worse experience than young Jerry. He made the journey of ninety miles without a stop, suffering incessant agony from a huge abscess, grey with pain, but urging his drivers on and on. He set out on a fine morning, but the second day was stormy, no day for travelling at all. The poor fellow could not bear to wait. "On, on," he said, and the drivers, plucky fellows, never stopped to camp, but plodded on through the night and all through the blustering snowstorm of the second day. It means something to trudge ninety miles without a rest, and with never a warm bite or sup—no food, in fact, but dried fish and frozen seal meat. Late at night they reached Okak, when all the village was in bed and no one had any thought of travellers; and I opened the door to their knocking, and saw the two travel-worn, snow-powdered figures bearing the sick man between them.

Another face that pushes its way to the front of my memory is that of little Kettura, a brisk little housewife from Nain, who came as a passenger on her husband's sledge to have treatment for her eyes. There she sat in her bed in the ward, with both eyes bandaged over; singing in her clear, sweet voice, and improvising an accompaniment on the guitar. As we went about our work we could hear the twankle-twankle of the strings and the quaint sound of her singing, hour after hour, tune after tune, as the happy little woman made light of her passing darkness.

When people like these travellers from distant stations began to come into the hospital, we cast about in our minds for some way of making them feel at home. It would never do to pen them up in a European house, with hardly an Eskimo face to see: such treatment would soon have depressed them. No, they must have Eskimo company; and so one of the first questions we asked them was, "Have you any relatives here?" because the Eskimos are very keen on recognising even the most distant relationships, and would pay a great deal of attention to a fourth or fifth cousin from a hundred miles away. I call to mind one man who gave a strikingly naive answer to the usual question. He was a cripple from the north, who came on a dog-sledge, and answered "Oh, yes" when I asked him whether he had any relatives in Okak. "Illale" (certainly), he said, "there is so-and-so, and so-and-so—" and he reeled off a string of names, most of them quite unfamiliar to us. "Ahaila" (yes), I said, "naukut inniksakarkât" (where have they their dwelling)?

"Illuvervingme" (in the graveyard), said the cripple.

FEEDING THE SICK FOLKS

One of the greatest problems that presented itself in those early days of Okak Hospital was the problem of food.

So often the people had said "We are Eskimos—we are different from Europeans," that I felt certain that there was a great truth in it. The missionaries have done the people a good service in persuading them to remain Eskimos in their food and clothing: there has been no attempt to force European ways upon them; and I am convinced of the wisdom of this attitude because I have seen how the natives degenerate when they take to European food. They lose their natural coating of fat to a great extent, and need more clothing to withstand the cold; they become less robust, less able to endure fatigue, and their children are puny.

Perhaps it is their great tendency to imitate that explains why, at the more southern of the stations, where English-speaking settlers live among the people at their villages, the Eskimos are not so fine physically as those living in the north. Whatever the reason, the fact remains: and so I tackled the feeding problem. When a sick man came to hospital I told his friends "You may bring Eskimo foods for him," and they hailed the suggestion with delight. I found them a little shy, at first, of letting me know what Eskimo foods really were. I knew from hearsay that seal meat and codfish are the staple things; and for a while the sick folks were supplied with those: but presently friends began quietly to bring other things—Eskimo dainties, I might call them.

I went into a ward one day, and found a woman sitting up in bed sucking and chewing at a pile of raw fish-heads—which she hastily set aside when she

saw me. Presently she took them up again, and fell to with the remark, uttered with a shy smile, "Mammadlarput ukkoa (these taste very good)."

Another had a lot of what looked like dried dates, threaded on a string. This curious collection looked very like a necklace, and she kept it by her bedside, and picked one of the objects off to chew whenever the fancy seized her. They puzzled me for a time, until Juliana (who had made my skin clothes, and had now become our first Eskimo nurse) enlightened me. "These are trout-stomachs, dried in the open air"—a real Eskimo tit-bit.

I might make a long list of the foods the people brought—seal meat raw, dried, boiled, fried, and even made into a stew with flour and giving forth a most appetising smell; the flesh of reindeer, foxes, bears, hares, sea-birds of all sorts; eggs of gulls, sea-pigeons and ptarmigan, the gull's eggs especially being sometimes in a half-hatched state, with great, awful-looking eyes inside them; trout and cod and salmon; the boiled skin of the white whale and the walrus; raw reindeer lips and ears—these are only some of the peculiarly Eskimo dishes that passed before our eyes; to say nothing of attempts at European cookery, such as home-baked bread, sometimes grey and sodden, sometimes light and wholesome, so that we wondered how Eskimo hands and Eskimo stoves could bake so well; roasted dough, as hard as bricks, a concoction of flour and water baked on the top of a tiny iron stove; and even, on festal occasions, dough with currants.

The list might be longer: as a matter of fact, about the only food the people did not bring to hospital was their great delicacy—rotten seal-flippers!

I made the acquaintance of this remarkable item on the Eskimo menu when I was visiting in one of the houses on the hill. The people were grouped round a wooden tub which contained a pile of grey and slimy somethings; the smell that arose from the tub was subtle and evil.

"What have you got?" I asked them; and the head man of the household answered with the Eskimo word for "rotten."

He held a flipper up for me to see, and shook his head with a smile as he said "You could not eat that; it would make you ill."

"Ahaila," said another man in the circle, "only strong people can eat rotten flippers. No good for sick people. Illâle, but we like them, and they do us good, but the people in the south have forgotten how to eat rotten flippers, and their stomachs have grown too weak. Mammadlarpulle (but they taste good)." How long those flippers had been soaking in that tub I did not find out, but they were assuredly gamey.

And the man spoke a truth; the northern Eskimos are far more primitive in their food than are the southerners; and yet, all along the coast, they still keep to the staple diet of raw meat that earned for them in olden times the epithet "Eskimo —eater of raw flesh" which, as the story goes, the Indians hurled at them in derision. And without a doubt the raw foods suit their peculiar constitution the best.

I found that the people refuse food so long as they feel acutely ill: their one cry is "Immilanga, immilanga (water, water)." As a consequence they waste away at an extraordinary rate; and after a

few days of serious illness the quondam plump and ruddy Eskimo is gaunt and haggard, with bony face and wrinkled skin; he seems to have grown old all of a sudden. But with the beginning of convalescence the feeding begins. So soon as the invalid loses his pains and his feeling of misery his appetite returns, and he devours immense quantities of meat and fish, washing them down with copious draughts of water. This fattening process is even more wonderful to watch than the wasting: the hollow cheeks fill out, wrinkles disappear, limbs grow round and plump again, and the face looks younger day by day. All sorts of food are welcome, but without a doubt the native foods are the foods that work the miracle. I have seen the people sitting up in bed, munching strip after strip of tough dried codfish and leathery nipko (dried reindeer meat), and dipping the strips between the bites into a cup of cod-liver oil kept handy for the purpose. I suppose the oil moistened the meat; at any rate it gave it a proper Eskimo flavour—but it must be proper Eskimo oil. I thought to save trouble by getting a gallon of the real thing from the oil yard; but no, the sick folks wanted it fresh and home made, and I besought their friends to bring them some. It came, the crude article, brown and nauseous, the result of frying livers over the stove in the family frying-pan; and it was like honey to their palate. They dipped and chewed, and sucked and chewed and dipped again, and said "Piovok" (it is good), "Ananâk" (splendid). And I wondered, as I watched them eat, whether it was that same all-useful frying-pan that gave the subtle and indescribable flavour to all home-made Eskimo foods, a flavour that the people

seemed to miss in the native cookery done in our hospital kitchen!

But, after all, the raw foods suit them best, and they know it. I went into one of the huts during my first week in Okak, to see a young woman who was just recovering from a serious illness. The spectacle that greeted me when I opened the door was enough to alarm the bravest: there sat the woman on her bed, a gaunt and white-faced spectre, with her breast bare, and blood dripping from her mouth. I thought some dire catastrophe had happened. "Whatever is the matter?" I said. For a moment she was silent: she was shy: then she said "My husband has brought me home akkigivik (a partridge)," and she lifted her hands to her mouth again, and tore with gusto at the raw, warm flesh of the bird.

When once their shyness was overcome there was no difficulty about feeding; some native food or other was always in season, and people were always willing to bring a share of what they had.

There was genuine sacrifice—sacrifice, I mean, with the right motive behind it—in those gifts of meat. Men used to come with dishes and pots, containing lumps of raw flesh or samples of native cookery, and hand them over with a shy smile and a laconic "for the sick folks." And, incidentally, it was over a matter of food that my friend Paulus showed me that the people had really grasped the meaning of those bedsteads that had puzzled Veronica. He came one day dangling a leg of reindeer meat, and handed it to me with a little speech. "I know," he said, "that nipko is very good for the sick folks. They like it, and it gives them nukke (sinews). Take this meat, and have it made into

nipko. No, I will not take it home, because if I do the meat will be eaten up. Keep it here, and have it dried; then you will have some good nipko for next winter, to give to the sick people if there are any."

I wonder are the Eskimos unique among the nations in their disregard of vegetable foods? I sometimes saw them getting young willow shoots and one or two other little bits of green, and eating them as a relish to their meat; but they make absolutely no attempt to till what soil there is, and they do not even make the most of the plants that grow. During the short weeks of summer the vegetation springs up in a perfectly marvellous manner. I was astonished at the profusion and variety of the wild plants and flowers that cover the hillsides. Surely among this wild scramble of plant life there must be some things that are good to eat! I know that there are plenty of dandelion leaves, and I have tasted worse things in my time, but the people never touch them. It was a marvel to me how the Eskimos managed to keep free from scurvy, eating so little green food; but the settlers on the coast say that seal meat does instead of vegetables, presumably because there are similar salts in it, and so eaters of seal meat are able to keep healthy. It is very likely true, for the Eskimos, whose main food it is, are practically free from scurvy. We Europeans could never take to seal meat; it looks very black and nasty, and has a queer, inky, fishy taste that goes against a fastidious palate; but the people only smile at our lack of appreciation of their greatest delicacy, and tell us "Mamadlarpok" (it tastes fine).



AN ESKIMO GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

A great-grandmother is a rarity among the Eskimos. Their hard life and the trying climate make them old early. Though they marry young, they are mostly worn out before they are old enough to see a fourth generation.

I found plenty of mushrooms on the hillsides on the warm days of August, but the Eskimos would have none of them: in fact, they were hardly to be persuaded to gather them. To their minds there is something uncanny about mushrooms. "Aha," they used to say, "the food of the Evil One—piungitut (bad)."

But though gardening is entirely foreign to the Eskimo nature, they do not entirely scorn the good things of the earth.

The berries are a great boon, so much that after the failure of the berry crop in 1904—because a plague of mice had eaten the young shoots in the springtime—there was an epidemic of ill-health among the people. In most years the scrubby bushes that crawl upon the ground are loaded with succulent berries—a truly marvellous provision—and the people gather them not only by handfuls and bucketfuls, but by barrelfuls. In October, when the ground was already becoming powdered with snow and frost, and there was ice upon the pools among the moss and on the stones that strew the beach, I have seen the Eskimo women putting their barrels on tall rocks, with heavy stones upon the lid, or slinging them over branches of trees, and I have asked them "Why?"

"Soon freeze," they answer, "high up—not get covered with snow—good all the winter"; and I saw that there is a certain amount of provident laying up for the future in the Eskimo life.

I was glad to see it, for I had thought at first that these hunters, who go out after the seals, and feast high while there is plenty, would have no other idea than to live literally from hand to mouth. But I

see that where Nature has taught them the need, they lay up store. They dry reindeer meat after Easter, and keep it for the weeks when the ice is cracking and seals are hard to find; they dry codfish in the summer, simply hanging it in the open air unsalted, and use it for food between the going of the codfish and the coming of the seals in autumn; they store up the berries for the winter. With these exceptions, which are long-established customs, the Eskimos are not a thrifty folk. Even the promise of a ten per cent. interest on their savings does not make these hunters see the value of a bank balance: they like to handle the worth of their earnings at once, and in solid substance.

CHAPTER XXIII

LIZETTA—"BROKEN"—NATIVE DOCTORS—SUPERSTITIONS

MY story of the starting of the hospital would be sadly incomplete if I did not bring in the name of Lizetta.

She is a bright, brisk little Eskimo mother, who gives one about as good an idea of an Eskimo housewife as can be got.

She spends the day in working at the seals that her husband brings home, and in making boots and clothing from the skins; and she has to be pretty busy if she is to keep the hard-working husband and the active little brood of chubby toddlers properly clad. Scraping skins, cutting out, chewing leather to soften it, stitching and mending—these are her household duties; and besides them there are only the floor-scrubbing, and the wood-chopping for the stove, to make any real demand on her time. She wastes no time over cooking—food tastes ever so much better raw, she says: she is not hampered in the morning by having the beds to make—they need no making; just roll up the reindeer skin and spread the coloured counterpane, and there you are! Like other Eskimo mothers, she leaves the children a great deal to themselves, and trusts them to grow up strong and hardy. But unfortunately, though in the way of caring for them she does what other Eskimo mothers do, keeping them well-fed and well-clothed, the little folks in Lizetta's house are

puny, and so it came about that Lizetta was one of the hospital's most frequent visitors. Bright little soul, in spite of her troubles she was always cheery, and used to keep the people in the waiting-room in a continual state of merriment with her odd quips and her lively descriptions of anything that was happening. She and her little troop were blessed with an extra share of good looks, and made up in spirit for what they lacked in bodily vigour; in fact, a jollier family you could hardly imagine, and it is no wonder that we were all fond of them. This little mother came running one day to pant out the startling news that little Gustaf had "fallen and broken his back." I ran with all haste to the hut, with my mind full of dismal visions of the brightest of our little schoolboys moaning on a hard bed of reindeer skins, helpless and crippled. But no, little Gustaf was sitting on the doorstep, apparently as lively as a cricket. He had fallen and bruised his back; the pain had made him cry; and his mother had used the correct word under the circumstances to convey the information that his back was painful. "Broken" seemed a strong expression: it was the same word that she would have used in talking of a box smashed up for firewood; and I thought it was the cry of "Wolf" when there was no wolf. One learns to understand these things; it was no wilful exaggeration, but just an example of the Eskimo way of expressing things.

If an Eskimo has pain in any part of his body, that part is, to his way of thinking, broken. And similarly, if a man has a bad cough, his lungs are broken, and so on. The woman who came from the frozen snow-huts at Killinek to live in her brother's wooden house at Okak, and who found the warmth

more than she could endure, used just the same expression when she said "My life is broken." This is the idea upon which the native doctors work: something is broken, and must be mended.

In every village there are several of these "doctors," men and women who by some means or other have gained a reputation for unusual skill in dealing with sickness. Of medicines they have very few. They stew the twigs of the rosemary, and make a sort of tea: this is their panacea, and as it causes sweating perhaps it has its value. The brain of the codfish is another of their native medicines; and they have a great fondness for giving the raw liver of the seal to sick people. Many a time have I found them munching the little red cubes into which they like it chopped.

I found this little habit out because I used to wonder why seal's liver was so difficult to get from the people. It was the only part of the fishy-flavoured seal that we could eat with any degree of enjoyment, and during the winter it was often the only form of fresh meat-food that we could obtain; but in spite of the good price that we offered only a very few livers came our way.

Juliana, our first Eskimo hospital nurse, explained the mystery in a few words: "Tingo (liver) very good for sick people."

The fact is that the people set great store by it as a health-giving food, and there are generally feeble and ailing ones wanting all the liver they can get: also, by the way, it is a great tit-bit, so that we considered ourselves rather fortunate to get any at all.

The native "doctor" sets very little store by his medicines; there is "mending" to be done, and

accordingly he carries out his treatment by means of lengthy and mysterious manipulations. The Eskimos have a general idea of the constitution of the body; their constant work upon the seals gives them that; they know whereabouts the various organs are, but of the marvellous way in which those organs work together in the bodily economy they have no idea. The wonders of physiology are beyond the grasp of their child minds; they do not puzzle their heads over what they do not understand: "Taimaipok" (it is so), they say, and are content.

The native rubbers are rather shy of letting Europeans see them at their work, but this is merely the natural shyness of letting others see them at their peculiarly Eskimo habits. I have been a privileged, and sometimes unexpected, spectator a time or two, and found the manipulator surrounded by a crowd of men, all eager to see "how it is done."

There was a very famous rubber in Okak during my time, a weird old fellow, respectable and hard-working enough, rather primitive in his habits, but possessed of a deformity of the roof of his mouth which gave his speech an almost un-understandable twang.

I dare say his peculiarity was something of an asset, for he got frequent employment as a "mender" of "broken" backs and lame joints. There is no doubt that the rubbing was good for many things, but I think that the native doctors owe some of their popularity to the old Eskimo conservatism. I have known people come to hospital with such a tale as this: "I broke my back yesterday at my work. Old Jakko mended it last night, but it is no better!"

The work of the native doctors is an innocent

sort of thing; they profess no witchcraft or sorcery or magic; all that sort of thing has passed away as the other relics of heathenism pass, and whether it be in sickness or in health, the Eskimos are a Christian people.

The idea that parts of the body are broken, as an explanation of various pains, led to some curious experiences.

The Eskimos did not understand that one disease could produce aches and pains in different parts of the body; and it was quite a common experience for persons suffering from influenza—that bane of Labrador—to come and say, "My head is broken, and my back, and my bones, and my lungs; I am always coughing, and my throat, how it hurts," and then to ask for head-medicine and back-medicine and bone-medicine and cough-medicine and throat-medicine, ticking the items off on their fingers in business-like style.

Usually they asked for "siumik" (medicine), their favourite way of putting it; but when they had a string of medicines to recite it was generally "illingajomik" that they wanted—that which belongs to this, that, or the other pain. It was necessary to explain that the bottle contained something good for (or belonging to) all these pains; and then the person would look at the bottle, and eye me, and nod, and say "Ha," and walk off with a puzzled sort of air, as if he wondered how the different medicines in the bottle would know where to go after they were swallowed!

It was quite in keeping with their childlike ideas, and their lack of appreciation of the marvellous complexity of the human body, that they should, some

of them, think that a medicine good for one thing must be equally good for another. A man came in one day, and asked for some of "the red-coloured medicine."

I asked him, "What is the matter with you?"

He simply said, "Kujanna (never mind), I want some of the red medicine."

"No," I said, "not unless I am sure that it is the sort you need: tell me what ails you."

"I have sprained my shoulder," he said.

"Then the red medicine that you are talking about will not be of any use to you: it is not illingajomik for sprained shoulders."

"Atsuk," he went on, "my mate outside says that he thinks that red medicine must be the quickest kind, for it mended his pain. Give me the red sort."

Our old friend Maria voiced another side of the native simplicity when she came shuffling in one day, bursting with the dignity of her new position. Poor old soul, she had been married only a few days before to a worthy old fellow who was coming to the end of his days, and who had long been casting about for a wife to share his solitude. Maria was concerned for the old man. "I want knee-medicine," she said, "knee-medicine for the old man."

Visions of the poor old fellow tumbling over the stones outside his door and hurting his knees came into my mind.

"How did he hurt his knees?" I asked her.

"He has not hurt his knees at all."

More visions, this time of a poor old man crippled with rheumatism.

"Is the medicine for the pains in his knees?"

"No, he has no pains in his knees."

Now all this, long-winded though it may sound, is a perfectly characteristic interview; it gives a thoroughly true picture of the deliberation of an Eskimo statement.

"For what purpose does the old man want knee-medicine."

"Issumamnik" (my own idea), she said, "the poor old man has such feeble knees; they totter and shake when he gets out of bed in the morning, and when he gets up to walk about. I want some good knee-medicine to cure that."

Pathos and humour tumble over one another's heels when one comes to deal with Eskimo requests, and of course a good deal of the humour depended on one's early struggles with the language.

When I handed a person two pills, and tried to say "Take one pill to-day, and the other to-morrow," it struck me as very ludicrous to find, after a hot chase through the pages of the grammar book, that the proper way to put it was "Take that pill to-day, and its wife to-morrow." While I was up in the attic with the two carpenters, I was startled to hear shrieks of immoderate laughter pealing from downstairs. Presently our English hospital nurse, a beginner at the language, came up and said, "Sarah wants to see you, but when I tell her to come up here she only laughs."

When I got down to the porch Sarah went off into more fits of laughter. "Ai-ai, uttilerkêt?" (have you come back), she said. "Una" (that one) pointing to the nurse—"told me that you had gone to heaven, and I might go there if I wanted to speak to you." It was just an error of pronunciation,

"killangme" (in heaven) instead of "kollane" (in the attic); but for weeks and weeks Sarah chewed that joke, and used to burst out laughing as soon as she saw me.

Work among the Eskimos was, to me, a very fascinating thing. It is not all easy—nay, it can be trying and discouraging often enough. There is the touch of fatalism to combat; it is deep-rooted in the Eskimo nature. When disaster overtakes a man, he simply says "Ajornarmat" (it cannot be helped); and he generally says it without any resentment. But sanitary reforms caused a raising of eyebrows. "No," said the people, "that is not the way we do: our fathers never did that: it is not a custom of the people."

Impatience is another hindrance. The people willingly take to reforms of which they can see the immediate benefit; but a teacher must be very patient and unwearyingly persistent if he wishes them to adopt habits of which the benefit is more remote. Impatience and fatalism go hand in hand: the Eskimos will stick to their own old ways unless they can be made to see that other ways are better; and unless the innovations are plainly better —to Eskimo eyes—they take to them without enthusiasm.

I got many a glimpse of native impatience in the hospital out-patients' room; even the medicines, they thought, must work quickly.

The young fellow with the paralysed leg, who came to have the electric battery applied, got tired of it after a few mornings, and stayed away. When we had him fetched he said, "Tukkekangilak (there is no sense in it); I have had it several times, and



AN ESKIMO WOMAN FROM NACHVAK

A good example of the northern Eskimo face. This woman is one of the last of the tattooed Eskimos, and she has no more than a few faint lines on chin and cheeks. Tattooing was a heathen rite, and has gradually died out.

my leg is still lame. Why cannot it cure me at once?" But I found the Eskimos open to reason; they would listen gravely and seriously to little lectures on elementary anatomy; under proper supervision they were persuaded to try long courses of treatment in the hope of eventual cure—though I expect that when they got away to their summer tents or their sealing quarters they forgot again.

There are not many traces of superstition still lingering; but in my goings in and out I found a few. I remember how frightened one young man became because he had caught a fox with a peculiar mark upon it: "I shall die soon," he said.

There are a few little beliefs connected with occurrences in the hunt, but they are not often mentioned in these days; the fears and fancies of heathen times have passed away.

But I found the people afraid of the presence of death: not of death itself—that they meet with equanimity; but they are timid to be left with a dying person, and for this reason, if for no other, a deathbed is always surrounded by a crowd of friends. They have the curious custom of pulling down a bedstead on which a person has died, and building it up in another part of the house; and they sometimes go to the extreme of dismantling the whole hut, and building it again on another site. There seems to be nothing but superstition to account for these customs, for I have seen a man pull his hut down and build it up from the same material elsewhere, while somebody else put up a new hut on the discarded site. Superstition it seems to be, and as such it clings to the Eskimo nature; but I could not help thinking that, after all, it has a certain sanitary value. "Under

the bed" is a great place for poking all the useless lumber of an Eskimo household, and the shifting of a bed into another corner effectively clears the somewhat unsavoury accumulation.

"Just big children" said my friend the missionary; and these fears and superstitions are just signs of the child mind. If you go through a village in the night, you will see a tiny light glimmering in many of the houses. The people are fast asleep, but they like to keep a light burning; like children, they are timid in the darkness. But in many a household the fear has passed away. When night has fallen, and the evening prayers have been said, the Eskimo housewife puts out the lamp and the family settles to sleep in peace.

CHAPTER XXIV

ESKIMO COUSINS—VISITING—OUT WITH THE MOTOR BOAT

I HAD a rather amusing adventure with the ever-cheerful Lizetta during my first winter at Okak. There was an epidemic of infectious disease arising in one or two of the huts, and I knew enough of the companionable nature of the Eskimos to fear that the sickness might spread from house to house by reason of much visiting; so I posted a notice on the hospital door to say that there must be no visiting of the people sick with this disease. "Pullarviksakarungnaipok tâpkonunga"—read the notice.

This new departure met with a mixed reception.

Partly it was hostile. "That is silly; there is no sense in it. We Eskimos always visit wherever we like; it is the custom of the people."

Partly it was fatalistic, with that misunderstanding sort of fatalism that one might expect from the wilder spirits among the people. "If God's will is so, the sickness will spread in spite of anything that you can do: and if God's will is that we should not be sick, why may we not visit?" "Ah," I told them, "God is teaching men nowadays to take good care: He expects us all to obey the laws of health. Certainly He gives us our food, every one of us, but He gives us strength to earn our food, and hands to put it into our mouths."

And partly it was met by a thoughtful request. The solemn elders of the village came as a deputation.

"We agree," they said, "that the people ought not to visit those sick with this catching sickness, and the people will obey your words; but what about relatives? May they not visit their sick ones, the sick ones of their own family, and bring them food and make them happy?" "It is reasonable," I answered; "an exception shall be made for relatives who want to care for their sick ones: such people may visit." The solemn deputation nodded their heads, and withdrew to convey the decision to the village. After that, whatever bedside I visited, whatever house I entered, there I almost certainly found Lizetta.

"You ought not to be visiting here," I told her.

"Oukagle (but no), you are wrong," said Lizetta, taking up her defence with some warmth, "oukagle, this is my kattangutiarsuk (little cousin)." Upon my word, the whole village seemed to be Lizetta's cousin! "Illale (but certainly); her mother married the cousin of my mother"—that was enough: it meant a proper kattangutiarsuk.

It was only that the keen-witted little woman had bethought herself of her numberless relationships, and was anxious to help in her own bright way; for when I thought the matter over, I could not fail to see that most of the Eskimos must be related in some way or other. They are only a small nation; not many more than a thousand, all told; and for years they have gone on, marrying and intermarrying, until it is hard to find a family that cannot claim kinship of a sort with the greater part of their village. The Eskimos have little other prospect than to go on in the same way, marrying their own distant relatives, and I think that this is against their

chances of increase; and so I urged them, through the pages of their little newspaper (!) to widen their circle by choosing wives from other villages, instead of linking the families of each village closer and closer to each other. This close relationship is one of their drawbacks; and yet, with all their obstacles and all their drawbacks, they remain the masters of the frightful difficulties that beset their life; they are the real hunters of the Labrador.

Their endurance of cold and fatigue is far greater than their power of withstanding bodily illness. Accidents they can face; their powers of repair after injuries are truly marvellous; but disease is another thing. Their resisting power is low, and they are soon prostrate; and this, I suppose, is the way with all the nature peoples. And yet their pluck is very great. As long as an Eskimo feels really ill, or has severe bodily pain, he looks, and is, very ill indeed; but when the actual feeling of pain or distress is gone, he thinks that he is well again. It is partly sheer pluck, partly native impatience. The practical outcome is that an Eskimo invalid takes less care of himself than a more civilised person would do. He takes no notice of the onset of disease, but goes on with his work until, from pain or weakness, he can work no more. And he takes no notice of convalescence; he wants to be up and out and at his hunting before he can properly stand on his feet. I once went into a hut to see a young man who had inflammation of the lungs. He was very ill indeed, and there was some doubt about his living through it; his friends sat watching him with great anxiety. Next day I found the hut empty! "Ah," thought I, "his friends have moved him to another house;" they have

a great trick of doing that; so I set off to investigate. But the man was not in the village, and I was puzzled until a feeble hail from across the water set me on the right track. There was the sick man, alone in a little boat, pulling manfully at the oars, and coughing as he pulled. "I am all right now," he shouted, "yesterday I was very ill; I had much pain. Now I am better; I have only got a cough." He had been to clear his trout net!

There is plenty of incident in a doctor's daily round in Labrador, though it be only in the mild form of peeps at typical Eskimo life, or small adventures such as falls down great snow-pits or even a plunge through the roof of a buried hut or a sudden and painful descent into a sort of cave full of vicious sledge-dogs which was the householder's buried snow porch. But visits are not always tame; they can be well spiced with adventure, even on a summer's day.

I remember as if it were yesterday the quaint, squat figure that came trotting along the beach round the head of the bay; before she reached me she had begun to deliver her message. "Come," she said, "come, tuavigit (be quick), my sister—very ill —quick." She pointed towards a white dot on the rocks at the mouth of the bay. "Tuppivut-una" (that is our tent), she went on; "umiakarkêt?" (have you a boat). I had a boat, a rare little tub, but there was nobody to help with the rowing. "Unêt," said Augusta, and in a few minutes she and I were taking turns at the rowing, for an Eskimo woman is brought up to take her share of the work in a boat, and besides, we could not spare the time to trudge those nine miles over the pebbly beach. The tide was on the ebb, and we got across in splendid time. Many

a merry hail did we get from the fishing boats as they passed us on their way home, for all the village had been a-fishing. It was a rare reward at the end of that long pull to kneel on the soft moss beside the rude couch of reindeer skins, and hear the whispered "Nakomêk" from poor tired suffering lips: life is wonderfully well worth living at moments like that.

By the time I was ready to start back the tide had turned, and with it had come the wind. The little ripples on the bay were all crested with white, but it was a home wind and a home tide, and I set out on my solitary journey without any misgivings. But half-an-hour later I was wishing I had walked round. My tub of a boat was bouncing about like a cork, with great waves chasing after it, and I was struggling to get the oars into the water and keep in front of the sea. If I got broadside on I was done for, for the sea was high enough to swamp the boat in an instant; and with the water only two or three degrees above freezing-point a two miles' swim was an utter impossibility. So I stuck to the oars till my fingers were numb, silently praying all the while for strength to win through. But the biting spray takes all the nerve out of an Englishman's fingers, and my grip began to loosen; and more than once the boat turned enough to ship a heavy smack from one of the chasing waves. There was a mighty bump, and I tumbled backward off my seat. A rough hand seized my arm as I fell, and I found myself scrambling into Paulus's boat, with Paulus's round face beaming at me from under a mop of sodden hair. He had the tiller in an iron grasp, and with one hand he was hitching the painter of my

little boat to a hook. Happily he was the owner of a fine big trap-boat, but he had his anxious moments as he worked her round. There came an almost imperceptible lull—a rather smaller wave; Paulus flung his weight on the tiller, and ducked as the boom banged over—and we were racing homewards, with the nose of the boat roaring through the water. We were all right now, and Paulus grinned as he did his characteristic shake to get the wet hair out of his eyes. "Very nearly bad job," said he; and that was the only reference I ever knew Paulus make to the fact that he had saved my life.

Happily the need for such adventures no longer exists, since in the summer of 1908 a fine motor boat came to Okak Hospital as a present from generous-hearted friends. This was a great help: it meant that the people could easily be visited at their scattered fishing camps during the busy fishing season, when ordinarily they are away from the Mission station for days or weeks at a time; and so, not only would they be under better supervision, but the usefulness of the hospital to them would be vastly increased. And since the summer of 1908 the white motor boat, *The Northern Star*, has puffed busily to and fro.

I had the pleasure of a trial trip in her before I left the coast, and, as if to give me a proper appreciation of the boat's seaworthiness, the elements combined in the worst storm of the season. We made quite a large party; myself and wife, my successor and his wife, the English hospital nurse, Veronica the kitchen-girl, and Jerry. We took Jerry the organist because he happened to be at home, and because he knows every rock within miles of Okak;

and partly because of his huge delight at meeting a "pujoliarsuk" (little steamer) at such close quarters. "Tattamnarmêk," he muttered, as he scrutinised the engine—which he for want of a better word, called "erchavingit" (the ship's bowels)—"tattamnarmêk" (how marvellous).

Jerry was pilot, and, like a true Eskimo, he took his duties seriously: however much he may have wanted to see the working of the engine, he said no more, but climbed out to the bows and pointed out the way. We ran the ten miles to Uivak, and had a good look at his black, rocky sides; and I thought of the time when I saw him standing in the dark winter water, and when Johannes led the sledges over the top: but Jerry tapped me on the shoulder and said—"We go home now: bad storm very soon."

Round we steered, and nosed into the rising sea.

The boat travelled splendidly, and did good work against the wind; but soon the waves were crashing over the roof of the cabin, and Jerry, experienced man, began to be alarmed. As long as we faced the sea it was not so bad, but to get to Okak we had to run five miles broadside on to the storm. We tried it for a short distance; but, though I believe the boat might have got through safely, it seemed useless to risk so valuable a thing—to say nothing of our lives—when an hour or two might bring calm weather again. Jerry breathed a fervent "Nakomêk" when he saw the boat swing round and head for shore: he and I were soaked to the skin, and the water was slopping over our boots as we stood in the bows, but that was no new thing for him; his "Nakomêk" was not for a prospect of warm feet and dry clothes, but for the turning of our backs on the

tossing channel that we had tried to cross, and whose treacheries he knew so much better than I.

We dropped our anchor in a little rocky bay, out of the worst of the wind, and set ourselves to wait. But the storm only grew worse; it swung us round and round at the end of our chain until Jerry feared that the anchor would drag. Night fell with the wind still howling, so we made up our minds to a night in the boat, and foraged under the seats for eatables. We found some tins of meat and a bag of ship's biscuit, rather tough and unpalatable food for folks who were half seasick; however, we were thankful not to be starving, so we gnawed our supper like rats and settled for the night. There was not much sleep to be had, though we rolled from side to side, and counted sheep in our minds; the ceaseless howling of the wind, and the constant shocks as the waves battered against our walls, would have kept most folks awake; and Jerry, the only one of us who could, perhaps, have slept through the din, stood watchful and serious, leaning against the window of the engine room, with his eyes upon the anchor chain and the line of white breakers that marked the shore. Each time I turned to try a fresh position, there he stood; and in the grey of the morning, when I woke from a drowse, he was just as I had seen him last, silent and faithful, watching and waiting for the wind to drop.

We got ashore during the morning in the little punt that we had with us, and varied the monotony by finding some water to drink. Then came breakfast, a nameless mush of meat and biscuits and water, mixed in a meat-tin and warmed over a smoky fire among the stones; but once again I found that

hunger is the best sauce, and somehow I was not surprised at the way in which Jerry and Veronica smacked their lips over it. It was not until late in the afternoon that Jerry judged it safe to venture on the sea again, and then we ploughed along the troughs of huge waves, with the water flopping limply over us, and so reached Okak.

"Tikkikise?" said Jerry's wife, big placid Sibilla, "uigarnerasugi—ai, ai" (I thought I was a widow)—and then the two of them laughed and trudged away home together.

Writing about the motor-boat makes me think of Benjie.

Benjie is a small boy of five or six years, and the way he comes into the story is this. He was romping on the jetty with some other boys, when he tumbled into the seven feet of water that we have at high tide. The others clambered down and fished him out, limp and half choked, and brought him to hospital.

The child was soon fit to be out of doors, and we sent him home to his grandmother's hut, where he acted as general servant, wood-chopper, water-fetcher, fisherman, and what-not in the intervals of his play. Thereafter he seemed to be always hanging about the hospital steps, becoming strangely eager and restive at the least sign of our going out of doors: this turned out to be his odd way of showing his appreciation of the comforts of hospital—he had elected himself chief general helper on the motor boat! It was useless to talk to the boy; he was as deaf as a board; but he used to wait out there with dog-like devotion for some sign. A thumb jerked over one's shoulder meant oars to Benjie, and away

he would trot to fetch them, and then over the beach to haul the little punt inshore; and by the time I got to the water's edge he was in his place with the two oars in his baby hands, and a smile of utter content on his fat, round face. Sometimes, when there was a breeze blowing, it seemed a shame to let the little fellow row; but once when I took the oars away, he cried so piteously that I had no choice but to sit in idleness in the stern and watch the lusty little arms tug away.

He always "helped" to get the anchor up, and then wanted to take his turn at the wheel; but I deprived him of this last honour after he had grazed the side of the buoy that marks our Okak reef, and had given me my one and only view of the jagged rocks within a few feet of our planks.

Faithful little Benjie! His stolid face and gleaming eyes come to my mind every time I think of the Okak motor-boat, and so I have given him a place in my chronicle of the starting of a Mission hospital among the Eskimo hunters of Labrador.

CHAPTER XXV

ESKIMO HOUSES—MAKING WINDOWS—STUBBORN LEARNERS—A SCRUBBING-BRUSH EPISODE—MY HARMONIUM—A CONCERT

DURING my years in Labrador I saw very little of the old snow-house dwellings. They have vanished, except in the neighbourhood of Killinek and some other parts of the north, and all that I saw of them was on my sledge journeys. But snow houses on sledge journeys are but poor imitations of the real thing, with its ice-window and its carefully jointed protecting wall and porch, and especially its luxurious size. Sledge drivers always misjudged my length, at least until they got used to me. They persisted in building snow houses to fit Eskimos, and I had usually several inches of spare leg to tuck away into some cramped and awkward position. Julius and Johannes got to know my measure, so to say, and used to build me a house in which I could at least stretch comfortably if I lay across the middle; but, as I was about to say, in spite of their popularity as shelters on journeys, snow houses as permanent winter dwellings are getting very scarce.

At all the older villages the people have huts of wood or turf. I feel something like a war-horse with the scent of battle in its nostrils when I think of those old turf huts—iglos, the Eskimos call them. What unsavoury dens they were! How I thirsted to abolish them! Description is a poor thing when an Eskimo iglo is the subject; but try to imagine a

thing that looks like a heap of turf or sods, with a battered tin pipe sticking out of the top, and a long, low tunnel leading up to one side, and you have a fairly good mental picture of the outside of an iglo. Inside there is a lining of smoke-blackened boughs and trunks of little trees, all shiny with grease; a small allowance of light filters dimly in through a membrane of seal's bowel stretched across a hole in the roof, and the door, hanging limp upon its seal-hide hinges, permits the only suggestion of air to waft sluggishly along the tunnel porch. But the smell! There is nothing like it: it is the rancid, fishy smell of stale seal-oil. It smites your nostrils when you go in, and the heat from the little iron stove combines with the smell to make the stuffy atmosphere almost unbearable. Can the Eskimos be healthy in homes like that? Is it any wonder that I pine to see such dens abolished?

But the Eskimos are progressing; iglos are getting few and far between, and little wooden huts are cropping up like mushrooms. Long efforts have at last aroused ambition in the Eskimo mind. Your modern hunter wants a wooden house: it only costs a little trouble, and he knows that it is worth it. Some fine spring morning he calls his dogs together, and hies him to the woods. He builds a tiny snow hut for shelter, and lives on tough dried meat. He is after timber for a house, and from dawn to dusk he searches for the best of the poor stunted trees and chops them down. Then he builds a sort of scaffold, and gets his wife to help him saw the planks. Many a time have I seen them at work with their big pit-saws: the man is top sawyer on the scaffold, while the woman stands below and does her share, and so they



OLD IGLOS AT HEBRON

The iglos, or turf huts, in summer are overgrown with weeds; the snow has melted away from the winter porch, leaving only the framework; the membrane of seal's bowel is gone from the window; and the people are all away, camping in tents at their favourite fishing places.

get planks for their home. Building begins later on, for the seal-hunting and the cod-fishing are too important to be missed; but, sooner or later, before the next winter is due the Eskimo gets busy. He lays a foundation of stones from the beach or the hillside, and builds his beams and joists upon it; he works long hours, intent and serious, until he can proudly fling his tools down and say "My house is built."

Some men are too poor to spend precious days in cutting planks, or they have not dogs enough to haul timber from the woods away in the valleys of the mainland, and so, for them, the housing problem remains a problem. Some day, perhaps, there will be model houses for such men as these, either let at a small rent, or sold by instalments; and so I fondly dream of a healthy home for every Eskimo—but the problem has its very practical side: who is to pay? I must say candidly that a good proportion of the wooden houses that already exist are a real credit to their owners. In some of the best I have seen sofas and harmoniums, and even linoleum on the floor: but such houses are the homes of the mighty hunters, who keep a servant or two to help with the seal nets, and who are able to afford such little luxuries out of their earnings.

The average Eskimo house is a square room, with rather cramped accommodation for everything that goes to make up the daily round. Just inside the door you may stumble over the carcases of a couple of plump seals, brought in to thaw; on the wall behind the stove a big oily sealskin is stretched on a frame to dry; one corner harbours a little table, on which stands a stone lamp filled with nauseous seal-

oil, or maybe the seal-oil lamp is banished, and a gaudy paraffin lamp from the store takes its place; various queer-looking objects, such as snow-shoes, harpoons, dogs' harness, whip, bladders for floats, slabs of dried meat, bundles of straw for basket-making, skin boots and clothing, strew the edges of the floor or hang upon the walls, and a big corner is curtained or partitioned off for a sleeping-place. There may even be room somewhere for a new-born family of pups, brought in lest the other dogs should gobble them up when their mother was off guard; and the children of the household are playing all over the place.

Spare spaces on the walls are decorated with cards and pictures, or flowery-wall paper; bottles, tins, jars, and cheap ornaments stand upon tiny home-made shelves, and one or two alarm clocks are sure to be there, proclaiming their presence either by untimely and ear-splitting chimings or by the very loudness of their ticking. Anything will do to beautify an Eskimo house. One of the firms that supplied us with cocoa had the pleasing custom of enclosing a big coloured show-card in each of their packing-cases: these were a great prize for our simple-minded neighbours, and so it comes about that various grimy little Eskimo huts on the Labrador coast are graced to this day by the startling announcement that "So-and-so's cocoa is sold here"!

I found that warmth was the most serious thing to be considered, for the Eskimos of these days have got used to fires and cannot do without them. A good many of them are even losing the sleek coating of fat that the northerners possess, and the stove takes the place of this natural overcoat; but quite

apart from their personal feelings they need a stove to thaw the seals, otherwise their work would be at a standstill. I was chatting to some of them about the smallness of their houses. "Ah," they said, "we need them small to keep warm. We cannot manage to have more than one stove, for the woods are so far away; and we must have warmth to thaw our seals." It is true: but some of the greater hunters have solved the problem for themselves. I suppose they got tired of seeing grease and blood and remnants of seals slopping about on their hard-earned linoleum, or perhaps they wanted more space for the periodic feasts and palavers that are held in the bigger houses; but, whatever the why and the wherefore, some of the men have built a lean-to against their house, or have partitioned off an end of their big room, and have backed the stove up against a hole in the wall. So they have a special little room for the seals, warmed by the back of the dwelling-room stove; and when I found an improvement like that, springing from pure Eskimo ingenuity, I knew that it would soon be popular with the people, and down it went as part of my plan for those model dwellings I have in my mind.

"Yes," thought I, "warmth is a problem; but the stuffy, evil-smelling atmosphere is another." In some of those iglos, in winter, with their long snow tunnels to keep the cold—and at the same time effectively keeping the fresh air—away from the door, I have had to gasp for breath. How can folks be healthy in this sort of air?

I am not writing of the characteristic Eskimo smell: that cannot be abolished. Every house has some degree of the same odour; dirty houses and

clean, old houses and new, big houses and little, all have their share, and every Eskimo carries a hint of it about with him. It is the smell of seal-oil, of oil-sodden boots and harness, of lamps and cookery, beds and clothes. I thought it would wash out of the people themselves, but no; unlimited baths in hospital failed to dispel the suggestion in the air; it is a natural thing, the effect of a diet of raw meat and fish and blubber. I asked one of our most sensible men one day whether the people knew it. "Atsuk" (I don't know), he said, "but we do know that you Kablunâks (Europeans) have an odour of your own. We can always tell if any of you have been in our houses"! No, the Eskimo odour will always be there, even in those model houses of my dreams, but the stuffy, fœtid air can be removed. How to do it? Ay, there's the rub. I did some serious cogitating about it, but, as things turned out, the solution came in quite an off-hand and unexpected way. Tomas was building a new house, and he came to me with a very simple request. "I want to build a good house," he said, "because I catch many seals. I want glass windows, not windows of seals' bowels: I want to be able to see out of my windows when the days are fine. Can you find me a piece of proper wood for a window frame among the wood that you have?" "By all means," I told him; "here is a piece of soft pine: and you shall have it without payment if you will make a window like this of mine that opens on hinges." Tomas studied my window, and opened it and shut it, and grinned, and looked at me—and coveted that piece of pine. "Yes," he said, "it shall be;" and off he trotted with his prize—surely the

first Eskimo house-improvements prize! I walked along several times to see how he was getting along with his new house and his new window; and I found that another man, quite a poor fellow, who was building himself a tiny hut near by, was also making a window to open. He had seen Tomas at work, and, of course, was inquisitive. "Hello, Tomas, what sort of a window are you making?" "Ah," says Tomas, "new sort, very fine; see, it opens on hinges." "Piovok (that looks good): teach me how to do it; I must have a window like that."

Ay, even reforms can be infectious!

I do not for a moment want to take the credit for those windows that opened on hinges; it would be unfair to generations of hardworking missionaries if I did, for there were windows on hinges before ever I came to Labrador; but I saw a solution to my problem in that little incident. It was a case of working on the imitative faculties of these people, and trusting to reforms to become habits.

What stubborn learners they are! Tell them to do a thing, and they will do it out of mere obedience so long as your eye is on them; but leave them to their own devices, and they slip back to their old ways at once. They do not see the "why" of things. When I ordered sanitary reforms, they always used to raise their eyebrows. "Why should we do that?" they would say, "our fathers never did it: it is not a custom of the people."

But here was a peg to hang things on: the Eskimos would imitate. Imitate! I have never seen any one to equal them.

When I put on my skates, so as to have the distinction of saying that I had skated on the North

Atlantic, out came the boys with slabs of firewood and strips of bone—seal's ribs, mostly—or waste scraps of hoop iron from the cooper's shop, and made skates for themselves. They bound them to their soft boots with moist seal-hide thongs, and twirled and tumbled, and laughed and rubbed their bruises, till they could catch me up and swoop laughing round me, and sail off and catch me up again.

And they imitate so thoroughly too.

One day there had been a funeral, and after it was all over I heard a sound of singing. It was the funeral hymn over again. I looked out, and saw a group of boys, all standing round a long hole in the snow, and singing lustily. When their singing was finished they heaped snow into the hole, and built it into a mound, and very deliberately patted it smooth and then walked off two by two towards the village. I could not help laughing at the young rascals, for I suppose all children play at funerals. But these little Eskimos were doing things properly, for after the mock-mourners had all gone the mound gave a great heave, and a small boy poked his head up and crawled out, shaking the snow out of his shaggy hair as he ran to join his mates.

Yes, the Eskimos would imitate. If Moses had dug up the filth-sodden mud floor of his hut, and replaced it with a neat layer of boards, sure enough somebody else would want to do the same, and there would be a great time of digging and boarding. Some of the men went off to the woods for planks; others, who had not dogs enough, or who were too poor to spare the time, came to beg or buy our old packing-cases. Some of them seemed to think the marks on the cases a grand ornamentation of the floor, for they



AN ELABORATE SNOW PORCH

As soon as winter comes the Eskimos build snow porches to their doors to keep their houses warm. Winter changes the whole face of the village; many of the huts are buried in snow. Drifts, twenty or thirty feet high, are piled up by the wind, and the paths take the form of staircases up the slopes.

turned the boards the proper way up, so that the floors told tales of "Cube Sugar" and "Prime Lard" and "per *Harmony* to Okak." But the boards were there, and the trampled slush that I have had to splash through on my visits, and that reeked of what Shakespeare might have had in mind when he wrote "a very ancient and fish-like smell," was abolished.

But it was all very well to teach the people to have wooden floors; that was only half the lesson. The floors wanted washing! Eskimo floors are proverbially filthy; the thing cannot be helped. If the hunter is to earn his living, if his wife is to do her work and make the most of his catch, the seals must be thawed and cut up, and the floor will be spattered with blood and oil. Floor-washing is an established custom in most of the houses—in fact many of them are scrubbed out every day; but it looked as if it would be difficult to get the owners of the dismal little iglos to alter their ways; folks who had only got a dim inkling of the value of ventilation and clean floors, and who had mostly lived their lives under the shade of seal-bowel window panes and in the odour of blubber-soaked floors—it seemed as if it would be hard to persuade them to scrub those floors and open those windows. But the idea was there, working in their own minds, talked over, maybe, at their great palavers; better times are in store for the Eskimos, and the making of better things is in their own grasp, though perhaps they only partly know it. I got a hint of the trend of things from an Eskimo woman, a nice quiet soul, a widow, whose misfortune it was to live in a hut of the most horrible sort. Her son was somehow

inspired to build a new house. Now it happened that Sarah used to do odd bits of work for us, and we used to pay her mostly in kind. Her quaint requests for payment would fill a page—once she came and asked for a tin of Swiss milk (!) because her son's wife had got a baby, and Sarah wanted to celebrate the tremendous occasion that had made her a grandmother, and a very young and blooming grandmother too, by giving the baby a tasty and appropriate present. I hoped, however, that the new arrival would get fed as Eskimo babies ought, and very likely the big members of the household would eat the Swiss milk off their fingers. But to get back to my story: on this particular occasion Sarah giggled and was shy.

"What do you want, Sarah?" (More giggles!)

This was strange, and I wondered whatever could be in Sarah's mind. After much coaxing, out it came. "My son," said Sarah, "has built a new house, you know, and we have got a wooden floor. I should like to keep it clean, and scrub it often. *Will you give me a scrubbing-brush?*"

Never have I given anything more willingly! I rushed off to get that scrubbing-brush, blessing Sarah's good Eskimo heart for its spontaneous longings after cleanliness.

One of the great difficulties that has always confronted those who have spent their lives in teaching the Eskimos is that the people, in the natural conservatism of their minds, nearly always resent new ideas and new suggestions. My own experience has been that they are far more teachable and tractable when they are in a good humour. A certain degree of good humour is the natural Eskimo state

of mind, and it takes but a little to bring the amount to an effervescent, bubbling over stage.

Then was the time to point a moral; then was the time to propose some sanitary reform; then was the time to teach some wholesome lesson. The magic lantern was a great help in this direction: the people shouted with glee to see their own faces on the screen, and sat quietly listening while I told them some Bible story or talked of better houses and ideal home life.

I must confess that it took me some time to understand their sense of humour. I thought that anything obviously grotesque would make them laugh, so I drew a caricature of a reindeer on a glass slide and showed them that. I know that it was funny, because the missionaries laughed; but the Eskimos received it in stony silence. "Come," thought I, "this is a funny thing, you ought to enjoy this:" and I left the grinning, knock-kneed thing on the screen for a minute or two, and finally put in an explanatory suggestion "Tuktu-ai" (a reindeer, eh).

Big Josef's small voice broke the silence: he is the mighty hunter of Okak, and spoke with weight. "That is not like a reindeer: now we know that you have never seen one. Come to the hunt with me next Easter, and you will see what a reindeer looks like; then you will be able to make a better likeness."

The first laugh I got out of them was at a picture of one of the Nain Eskimos crouching behind a rock, aiming at an imaginary seal with his gun. They roared with glee, and rolled about in their seats shouting "Look at him—ai-ai, just see—it is Joas of Nain, and he is shooting left-handed." I had put the slide in the lantern wrong side about!

I found it very easy to please the people; they would look at pictures by the hour, and as for music, it was the very summit of bliss. When I got a new harmonium with stops there was a constant procession of visitors to see the marvel. They gave deep grunts of wonder when I pulled out the stops and caused the different tones, and leaned over to pull them for themselves; and when the coupler stop came out and the octave keys went down without any fingers touching them they edged away with apprehension, and then came crowding back to see it again.

The best music, to their minds, is the gramophone. That pleases them the most; it sings and plays and talks and whistles; and, as one of the people said to me one evening when I suggested that they had had enough, "We could listen to it all night."

Some of them had never seen a talking machine before, and I had to laugh at their bewilderment. They got close up to the trumpet, to see what was going on at the bottom of it; they held the discs to their ears, in the hope of hearing the music that way; they scrambled for the worn needle-points, and carried them home as trophies; and all the time they kept up a running fire of comments—"Ai-ai, that is the voice of a very tall man; nala, it is even better than our brass band; immalê, why cannot it sing like an Eskimo?"

CHAPTER XXVI

A Lonely Land—The Coming of the Ship—Our Postman—Visitors—Labrador Gardens—The Language.

LABRADOR is a lonely land. That is its reputation; but we who live and work there round the year find it such a little world of its own that we have no time to mope and feel lonely.

Time flies, even in lonely Labrador.

But however absorbed we might be in our work and in the people around us, however much our thoughts might move in our little Labrador circle, we all of us looked forward to the month of July to bring the great red-letter day of the year, for in the month of July we expected the ship. It seems a wonderful thing that so small a ship as the *Harmony*—a barque of 222 tons, fitted with steam and sails—should cross the Atlantic so regularly, and never fail, year after year, to link us up with home and kindred; but so it is. The *Harmony* is in skilful hands: there are the prayers of God's people behind her: and perhaps that is the explanation of the thing.

We could never know the day; but as July dragged by we deserted the jetty on our daily walks, and climbed the hills instead, stumbling through sodden moss and patches of half-melted snow for the sake of a view of the ocean. I know that such hill climbing was futile, for the Eskimos

at their sealing-places are certain to see the ship first and give some signal; but it relieved our feelings, and that was something. We wrote our letters, we made room in the store for the new cargo of supplies, we talked and talked and talked about the ship—we could talk of nothing else—until at last there came a sudden shout, sudden in spite of all our waitings. "Pujoliarluit" (the big steamer) it roared and shrilled from all parts of the village. Guns banged; people came running, shouting as they ran, racing for the jetty; and out on the bay a man was paddling home as if for dear life. As soon as he was near enough to be heard he yelled "A fire on Parkavik." That was enough; a fire on the beach might be cookery, but a fire on the hill was the signal; and he in his kajak had seen the smoke and had fired the two bangs with his gun that the people understood. Boats came bustling across the bay, with sails spread and oars all busy: and in half-an-hour the quiet village was populous again. Every house seemed to have a flag, from the big red ensign on the Mission flagstaff to the bandanna handkerchief that was fluttering on an oar out of somebody's window. Even the old widow in the hut behind the hospital was entering into the spirit of the day; she had no flag, but she had sacrificed her red petticoat, and was scrambling up her roof to pin it to a tentpole propped against the eaves.

It was an hour or more before the ship came into sight, and then, when the tall masts came peeping over the rocks of the point and the little black hull slipped silently into the mouth of the bay, the shouting and banging began afresh. The

men were wild with glee: I saw one brawny fellow with a Winchester repeater letting off round after round in his delight, until he had shot away enough cartridges to account for dozens of prospective seals; he was as delighted as we, and that was his way of showing it.

One gets a trifle sentimental in Labrador; and I never saw the ship come or go without a lump in my throat. It means so much, both to us and to the Eskimos, that everybody looks upon it with real affection; and it was with throbbing hearts that we waited for the anchor to drop.

The ship came slowly on and on, looking strangely near in the clear air; we could see the fur-clad captain on the bridge, and the first mate standing on the bow, just over the painted angel that spreads her wings beneath the bowsprit. The mate's hand rose; there was a sharp clatter, and the anchor plunged into the water. At the same moment Jerry the organist raised his voice, and the people joined in the famous old chorale, "Now let us praise the Lord."

"Gud nakorilavut
Omamut illûnânut."

The Moravian Church uses it as a New Year's hymn; and I thought it fitted in rather well with the coming of the ship, for that is by far the biggest milestone in the round of the Labrador year.

The *Harmony* was our first source of news after the long winter, and, naturally enough, we used to go on board all athirst for information and bursting with questions. How the captain must have smiled to himself at the perennial volley.

"Is the King alive and well?"—"How is the world?"—"Is there peace everywhere?"—Such questions do not seem so odd if you remember that we had not seen a newspaper since the year before! And letters! We got our big budget by the ship; but there was always a winter bag by the overland mail from Montreal to Rigolette, and this was handed along by one means or another until we got it about March.

During the winter we had a little Labrador post of our own.

On the 20th of January big Josef started south with his sledge and dogs, to meet the messenger from the southern stations at Nain. After a stay of two or three days to give the Nain missionaries time to read and answer their letters—days which Josef spent in going the round of the village and delivering the laborious salutations of which the Eskimos are so fond—he travelled back again. We used to meet him as he drove up to the Mission house, and shake his great hand, and smile, and tell him we were glad to see him—and so we were.

Sometimes there were a few belated European letters in the bag, a welcome spice in the pile of coast news; aye, we knew what it was to feel thankful for the postman, in Labrador.

Next day Jerry would take the mail sledge northward, while Josef rested on his laurels and told tales of his trip, and delivered himself of his burden of salutations. He went about it with great solemnity. He had all the greetings written down, and usually called a mass meeting in one of the huts to get rid of the most of them. Sometimes he had a general

message to deliver, and in such a case he would beg leave to announce it after one of the meetings in church. The congregation sat quietly in their places, while big Josef rose and stalked solemnly to the missionary's table. "Jonas and his wife, Nainemiut (Nain people), send greetings to all the people of Okak," he would say in his quiet voice, and then make his dignified way to his seat by the door, while the people shuffled and began to pick up their hymn-books ready for home.

Jerry, our northern postman, was a great man for adventures; he generally had something out of the common to relate.

Once he broke through thin ice on a river, and had to run all day long to keep his clothes from setting stiff and jointless—he must have known what the old knights felt like in their armour: another time he was caught in a storm, and had to spend a couple of awful nights among the rocks and the snow. When he wanted a drink of warm tea, he cut chips off his sledge and made a fire. So much for our great luxury, the postman.

Our other great luxuries were our occasional visitors.

They used to come quite unexpectedly, for they had no chance of giving warning: imagine our delight, therefore, at an unexpected vessel or sledge, bringing news, and above all, bringing a fresh voice to talk to us. I am afraid we rather bored our visitors, dragging them into our rooms to make them talk and tell us the news; but let them be consoled, because their visits were real godsends to us in our lonely land, even though they had come, first of all, to see the Eskimos and the scenery.

Certainly the Eskimos took great interest in our visitors. I remember one gentleman who was on the hill taking photographs of birds, snap-shotting them in their wild haunts. The Eskimos could not understand this. "What is he doing?" they said. "Takka, see him, he is crawling on his hands and knees among the stones; ai, ai—now he is hiding behind a rock—whatever is he after?"

One wiseacre among them, who had perhaps heard of Klondike, suggested that the gentleman was finding gold! "Goldemik," they chorussed, and after him they went, peering and muttering as he crouched among the moss, and searching intently wherever he happened to make a halt. I am not surprised that they have the idea of gold, for the rocks are rich in copper and iron, and several times the people have brought shining lumps of pyrites to me, to ask "Is it gold?"

I saw one visitor gazing with rueful countenance upon a ruinous-looking heap of sticks on the jetty. He had bought a kajak the day before, and had unwisely left it out of doors to wait for the ship, and during the night the dogs had made a meal of it. No doubt they found the sealskin cover tasty; but they had also made an attack on the oil-soaked framework, gnawing it as if it were the bones of the thing. The Eskimos are wise enough to put their kajaks on poles; I thought it was to keep them dry, but I see now that it is partly to keep them out of the jaws of the dogs.

But work was the great thing that kept us healthy in mind and body. While the people were at home we were constantly among them; while they were away at their hunting and fishing

there was always work to be done, either outdoors or in.

As soon as Easter was over we set to work on the snow-clearing. This was a task for the women and the old men, while the hunters were after the reindeer. The snow that had drifted against our walls during the winter had to be dug away: it seemed an immense task, but to leave it undone would mean that when the thaw came our floors would be swamped and our foundations washed away, so we followed the example of the Eskimos and cleared it away. The biggest task was to dig out the river. This was buried under thirty feet of snow, caked hard with the wind, and in some parts of it the people had to work like navvies at a railway cutting. The men used to cut the snow into blocks with great sword-knives, and heap it on the sledges; then the women raced with the load down to the beach, and tipped it among the ice-hummocks. Easter fell late one year, and the river began to run before its course was properly made. The first hint I had of it was a noise at the back of the hospital, and there I found a sort of miniature Niagara roaring over the edge of the snow-drift and lashing against our walls. The church floor was flooded; and some Eskimos in a hut near by woke from their slumbers to find their chairs and their boxes floating about, and themselves in bed in a house full of water. We called for volunteers, and had soon given out all the spades and shovels; those who were too late for spades took hatchets and snow-knives, poles, oars, planks, and anything, and before the day was out the river was running furiously in its proper channel.

While we were directing the people at the snow-clearing, we followed their example, and wore dark goggles to protect our eyes. The old Eskimo custom was to wear a strip of wood with a narrow slit cut in it over each eye; but smoked glasses are so cheap and easy to get, that the old fashion has gone out. The Eskimos have not big enough noses to wear the ordinary spectacles; at the least jolt the spectacles slip down into the wearer's mouth; so they stitch the glasses into a strip of black cloth, and bind it round their heads.

Every spring, after the return of the reindeer hunters, we had our meat-tinning time. The hunters were very willing to bring legs of meat at a reasonable price, and the washing, roasting, cutting up, and tinning of the meat made quite a busy week. We put up enough reindeer steaks to last us two or three dinners a week for a twelvemonth, and though we were only amateurs the meat was always wholesome. After the tinning came the gardening. This sounds a remarkable thing, gardening in that proverbially bleak and barren place, Labrador; but by care and hard work the missionaries of years ago have made gardens, and we reap the benefit of their labours. There is not much soil; the spade soon comes on clay and rock, and probably those old missionaries had to carry soil in barrows and build it into gardens before they could get their vegetables to take root and thrive. Six or seven feet down the ground is permanently frozen, as they discovered at Nain a few years ago, when they were digging a hole for a flagstaff. The thick blanket of snow that covers the soil in the winter preserves some of the roots; our English rhubarb used to come up year

after year, rather stringy and small, perhaps, but none the less alive. We got the snow cleared away in May, and then left the ground to thaw in the sunshine. The actual planting out did not take place until July, and in the meantime the vegetables were growing in the house or under frames. Our minds used to run upon gardening from as early as February, when we sorted the likeliest of the potatoes from the others, and laid them on trays in the warm store-room to sprout; but we had to wait for the soil to thaw, and it was not until the nights began to get a trifle milder that we dared to put our cress and lettuce and cabbage and potatoes in the open air.

Then the gardens wanted nursing.

Our three enemies were the dogs, the mice, and the frost.

The dogs were delighted to have a patch of freshly dug soil for their romps and their scrambles, but we managed to keep them out by the help of wooden palings. Sometimes they climbed over, or burrowed underneath, and then it was good-bye to our garden stuff; but mostly we made things secure enough to baffle them. The mice were a more serious nuisance: they were wide-awake and very hungry, and found our nice young shoots of lettuce and cabbage very tempting, far better than buried twigs and frozen roots. It was rather a laborious thing to have to do, but in years when mice were plentiful we went round every evening and covered each shoot with an empty meat-tin, and made a second pilgrimage in the morning to uncover them all again. The frost we fought by covering each row with a wooden framework; and the old widows who worked in the blubber yard made it their

annual care to go round at night and spread sacks over the frame, and to take the sacks off and put them away every morning. For this they got a present of a couple of dollars and an armful of green vegetables at the end of the season, and shrill were their cries of "Nakomêk," and broad were their grins of happiness, when the time came for them to get their perquisite.

And this is how we managed to persuade the hardier sorts of vegetables to grow to a moderate and eatable size before the ground froze again in October.

And among all our other work, we had the language to learn. It is not an easy language, but I have this to its credit: it is beautifully grammatical, governed by plain, straightforward rules, and the rules are absolutely without exceptions. For this last reason I have even ventured to say that I would rather learn Eskimo again than any of the languages I had to learn at school. The great difficulty is that the learning involves a prodigious feat of memory; there are so many words for the same thing under different circumstances; and it is quite the proper thing to build up a word of fifteen or sixteen syllables by sticking all sorts of tags and bits between the unchanging root of a verb and its grammatical and expressive ending. To take a very mild example—

"Tikkipok—he comes;
Tikki-niarasuarkôr-pok—he will probably try to come."

On the other hand, there are quite short words which express some picturesque idea, such as ôtok—the seal which is basking on the ice in the spring sunshine; and, taken all together, the language is a

very storehouse for the seeker after something interesting. One thing that used to puzzle me was the use of "Yes" and "No" in answer to questions. If I said to a workman "Have you not finished yet?" and he answered "No," he would mean "On the contrary, I have finished." "Yes" would imply "Quite so, I have not finished." This always troubles new beginners, and I suppose that nobody has escaped misunderstandings with the people over the difference in usage. Another stumbling-block was their misunderstanding of dependent sentences. One day my wife said to the servant girl, "Veronica, if you do not do your work better, you will have to go home"—and home went Veronica on the instant, sobbing and wailing at what she thought was her dismissal. It is very pleasant to know that the language has been compressed in a grammar book and dictionary, for some of the pioneers must have had serious hours of thinking and planning to put abstract ideas in a way that the people could understand.

When the missionaries came, there was no word for "forgiveness" in the whole of the Eskimo language! They set about making one, and evolved the splendid picture-word "Issumagijaujungnainermik" based on the verb "issuma-vok" (he thinks).

And so the picture of forgiveness to an Eskimo mind is "not being able to think about it any more."

CHAPTER XXVII

The Eskimo and the Mission

IT was in 1771 that the missionaries of the Moravian Church came to Labrador. Before that time very little was known about the Eskimo people. Vessels seldom braved the stormy waters of Labrador, or, if they did, they ventured but little among the numberless rocks and islands that fringe the mainland. So it came about that the Eskimos were seldom seen; and the few reports that were brought to the civilised world by returning fisher crews described them as a totally savage and uncultured people. They seem to have deserved the name; for the first men who landed from the Mission ships were killed.

But this ministering to those who live in the remote corners of the world seems to have been a specially attractive thing to the Moravian Church, from the very beginning of its missions to the heathen; and here was a race, far off indeed, but none the less included in the old command, "Go ye . . . and preach the Gospel to every creature." The missionaries came, and began their quiet work of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ by word and example, a work that has been carried on without a pause through all the years since then; and so it has come to pass that the bleak and terrible coast of Labrador is peopled by a Christian race. Only at the furthest north are there still heathen; a tribe of wanderers

who are now clustered in their tents and snow huts around the little wooden church at Killinek.

At the older stations, with their weather-beaten wooden huts and their trim, white-painted Mission houses, the people are bred and born in a Christian atmosphere, and life at these villages gives a true picture of life in a native Christian community.

To see the people go to church is in itself an inspiration: the bell rings, and in they flock. There is no compulsion; they go because they like to go; it is a pleasure to them.

Of course during the seasons of open water the attendance is comparatively small; the people are scattered at their hunting and fishing places, maybe twenty miles from the village, and though a good number of the nearer ones come by boat for the Sunday services, it is in the winter that we see the church crowded every day. If any one wants to be cheered up, I recommend an Eskimo Christmas service. There is a dignity about it: the missionary has the people well in hand; they listen eagerly to what he has to say and read, and join right lustily in the hymns: there is pathos, too, as you can see if you look at the worn but beaming face of the cripple packed among a pile of reindeer skins on the floor; there is humour, too, in the way some solemn old hunter has to find a seat among the little children on the front bench because the other places are all full; he lets himself gravely down while the children nudge one another and edge away in awe.

It is a charming sight, to look over that sea of faces from the missionary's bench; every eye is fixed on the speaker, every face is tense and eager. In the very front are the children, on their special low

benches; at the back, against the wall, is the seat for the mothers, where they sit with their babies sleeping in their hoods, or waking to gaze around and whimper at the wonders they can see; in between are the boys and girls and grown up folks. Hardly anybody stays at home: the doors are locked against the prowling dogs; the frozen dinner waits upon the floor.

There is an Eskimo organist, and close to him sits the Eskimo choir, ready to lead the hymns or sing an anthem.

Jerry, our Okak organist, plays by ear, and coaxes splendid harmony out of our aged pipe organ with its octave of pedals and its row of half-a-dozen stops. For voluntaries he plays pieces from the oratorios or tunes from the newest collections; and when the hymns are announced he pulls out his stops and shuffles his feet on the pedals, and with a mighty burst of music the congregation breaks forth into singing, while Jerry, with his magic touch, leads the voices steadily on, in perfect tune and stately time.

It is a charming sound, the sound of singing from these rough people; a sound the like of which was never known in Labrador before the missionaries came. The Eskimos possess no native music, no traditional tunes, no melodious folk-songs of their own; the only music that they knew was the dismal and monotonous rhythmic chant which the heathen sorcerer used to aid his works of darkness. Somehow the soil was in the people, and the seed of music has taken root in it and changed the Eskimo nation into one of the most musical of peoples.

Jerry is our bandmaster at Okak; and on winter mornings, when the snow is powdering down, and



AN ESKIMO BOAT-BUILDER

As soon as the ice on the sea shows signs of breaking, the Eskimos begin to prepare for the open water, and the village boat-builder is in great demand. It is quite characteristic of the people that there is always an old man to stand by and give advice.



JEREMIAS, ORGANIST AND BANDMASTER AT OKAK

Jerry, the son of old Ruth, is a very clever musician, and is able to play classical selections on the organ. Most of the native houses boast a musical instrument of some sort—an oil-stained violin, a concertina, or even a harmonium.

the chilly air nips the fingers, he leads his little troop of bandsmen from house to house, delighting the populace with the blare of the trumpets. He likes to encircle himself with the bombardon, to lend a solid foundation to the harmony; but if one of the men is away he is quite able to take the cornet or horn or whatever it may be, and leave the bottom notes for Benjamin's trombone. It is hard work, but the bandsmen are happy; the morning frost may settle on their heads, the moisture may freeze inside their trumpets in spite of shawls and stockings wrapped round them, the mouthpieces may stick to their lips with the cold; but they are Eskimos; winter weather does not easily daunt them or numb their fingers; and, besides, to play a trumpet in the band is one of the greatest honours that an Eskimo knows. Good character comes first in the choosing of the bandsmen.

Several of the old customs of the Moravian Church have taken firm root among the Eskimos, and though in England they are lost, in Labrador they go on from year to year unchanged. Nature has hemmed the land of the Eskimos in with a broad barrier of ice; the marvels of these modern times, which are causing other countries to move with giant strides, leave the northern Labrador practically untouched; the years circle with a sameness that marks a little world; the people themselves are slow to change; and so the customs of years ago still prevail. The men and women sit apart in the church, the men on one side, the women on the other; the various sections of the congregation—children, single men, single women, married people, widows—all have their special festival days,

when they wear their native dress, and eagerly listen to pointed sermons addressed specially to themselves; modern hymn-tunes have not yet supplanted the majestic old chorales.

The people have their own little customs: a young girl ties her plaited hair with a pink ribbon; a married woman uses blue; a widow, white. The plaits at the sides hang down in front of the girl's ears, dangling in neat little knots; but when she becomes a full member of the church, attending the communion service—and this she may not do until she has reached the sensible age of seventeen—she loops her side plaits under her ears and fastens them at the back of her head. These are innocent little things, which appeal strongly to the Eskimo love of the picturesque, and suit their simple minds.

The practical control of the Eskimos has been left in the hands of the Mission; and the Mission, in turn, has taken the wise course of appointing a number of the people, generally three or four men and the same number of women, to act as helpers in the maintenance of law and order in the villages. These helpers are called "Kivgat" (literally "servants"), and their first duty is the care of the church; but they are the virtual leaders of the village life. Though they are "chapel-servants," their post is one of honour: they are chosen because of trusty and sterling character, and their service is for life. The least lapse from moral uprightness would mean deposal, but I have only once known such a thing to happen. It seemed strange to me, when I thought of the old Eskimo custom of making the best hunter the leader, regardless of his character, to see our Okak people listening with respect and

approval to the advice of one of the very poorest of the men, because he was a good man and a chapel-servant! Times have changed; and the Eskimos have learnt a better appreciation of a man's worth.

If there is a vacancy in their ranks, the remaining Kivgat meet the missionary and talk over the question of a suitable man or woman for the office, and there never seems to be any great difference of opinion about the right one to choose.

In addition to the chapel-servants, each village has a committee of three or four men, elected by the people themselves.

These men have more strictly temporal duties; they look after the outward welfare of the village, and convey the wishes of the people to the missionaries. Elections are by ballot, and take place every three years; and weighty functions they are. In our village of Okak there were four representatives, and every man thus had the right to put four names on a piece of paper: my duty was to collect the papers in a bowl, while the men sat solemnly in rows in the church. The missionary gravely unfolded the papers, and read the names aloud, while the store-keeper and I jotted down the numbers. It was quite evident that the thing had been talked over for many a day, for the voting was practically unanimous, and the reading of each paper produced a grunt of assent from the lines of voters. There was one spice of comic relief to the solemnity, and that was when we discovered that some village humorist had written his own name four times. "Aron, Aron, Aron, Aron," read the missionary; and the whole assembly went off into roars of laughter, while those who were near enough

clapped Aron on the back, and covered him with confusion. When the counting was finished the missionary read the result, and asked the four who headed the poll to stand. "Are you willing to serve dutifully as an elder of the people?" he asked them one by one, and when each had given his "Ahaila" of assent the meeting dispersed at the simple word "Taimak" (so let it be).

These chapel-servants and elders are wonderfully successful in maintaining the tone of native life; they are not only trustworthy people, but they have high ideals too. Witness their action when the drink evil began to get a grip upon the Eskimos. That was in 1907, after some evil genius had taught the people to brew a vile and powerful concoction from treacle and mouldy biscuits. Several of the men began to get drunk, and prowled about with all their evil passions loosed. The chapel-servants and elders called a meeting of the men in one of the biggest of the huts. "This new habit is bad," they said, "it will ruin the people: let us cast it out." And cast it out they did. Grave-faced men, with care upon their shoulders, travelled from Okak to the stations north and south; men from the other stations came to Okak; all were bent on the same errand, the discussion of the drink question. They returned from their journeyings with their aim accomplished: "Kajusimavut," they said, "the mind of the people is made up—the brewing and drinking must cease." They called the men together, and got a promise from every one that the kegs of liquor should be smashed and the drink poured on the snow, and that there should be no more brewing; and when one young man refused to smash his keg,



THE ESKIMO SCHOOLMASTER

Nathanael, of Nain, one of the most cultured of the Eskimos. He is probably the first Eskimo to compose music. He has written an anthem in four parts, which was sung by the Eskimo choir at the opening of the new church at Nain a couple of years ago.

two of the chapel-servants went along to his hut and did it for him. The drink evil was abolished; and so, by their own wish, the Eskimos became what they had always been, a teetotal nation.

I suppose that it is a remarkable thing to find a people amongst whom there are no prisons and no police and practically no serious crime, but so it is among the Eskimos of Labrador.

They are a peaceable, law-abiding folk; and the credit for it must be given to the simple Gospel that has raised them from the past of their race. There is sin, yes; they are prone to fall into their besetting weakness, a relic of the old promiscuous tent and snow-house life; but flagrant breach of order or discipline is very rare, so much so that a thief is almost an unheard-of being among these kindly, open-handed folk.

I think the thing that pleased me most in my study of this interesting people, was the fact that they are still true Eskimos. In all their patient preaching and teaching the missionaries have never forgotten that the Eskimo must remain an Eskimo if he is to win his livelihood as a hunter in the frozen climate of his land; and while they have instilled habits of morality and clean living, and have weeded out habits that are bad and harmful, they have urged the people to keep closely to their native foods and habits of life, and clothing; in a word, their policy has been to make the Eskimo a better Eskimo. The natural isolation of Labrador has helped them in this, and has helped them, too, to stand between the people and the vices that civilisation might bring if it were not grafted on their nature by careful minds.

The Mission is still hard at work, preaching the

simple Gospel and caring for the people. I wondered, when I first went to Labrador, how some of those Bible pictures, so familiar to us, could appeal to a people living in so desolate a land. There are no sheep in Labrador, no cows, no milk and honey—excepting the kind in tins; no fruit-trees better than the dwarfed brushwood that crawls upon the ground: but the Eskimo is a man who is not much troubled by doubts; he takes his Bible literally, drinking in its teaching with a child's simplicity; and, by the use of pictures and careful explanations, the Bible stories have become as real and helpful to the Eskimos as they are to us.

The Mission is educating the children: at every station school is held on four days a week during the winter months, and the children begin to attend after their sixth birthday. Usually the smallest are taught by an Eskimo; a wise thing, for an Eskimo has the knack of putting things in a way that the child mind can grasp; later, the missionary takes them in hand and leads them from the stage of strokes and pot-hooks and the spelling of queer syllables to real writing and the reading of books, and even among the mysteries of simple arithmetic. Reckoning is difficult; it is foreign to the Eskimo nature, so that even the numerals have had to be imported; there are no numbers in the Eskimo language beyond twenty, and the word for twenty is "a whole man—ten fingers and ten toes." But in spite of difficulties, by the time the boy and girl leave school they can reckon dollars and cents, and find their numbers in the hymn-book; and as for reading and writing, every Eskimo on the coast, over the age of twelve or thirteen, can manage so much, and their knowledge

of the Bible would put many a more civilised person to shame.

There is not a very extensive literature at the disposal of the Eskimo with a taste for reading; the Bible is the chief book, but besides it there are translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Christy's Old Organ*, *Jessica's First Prayer*, a book of short readings in natural history and general knowledge, the various school books, the hymn-books used in the church—and the newspaper! The Eskimo newspaper is by no means a daily; rather it takes the form of an annual budget, printed by the missionaries at Nain during the winter; but it tells the people something of the doings of other lands, and it helps to stir their loyalty as British subjects. I see by the copy that reached me by post the other day, that even the Eskimos are beginning to write articles, and doubtless they enjoy the conundrums that fill up a space at the foot of one of the columns. The people like their newspaper, and I think that it deserves its title, though it be an unwieldy one in these days of crisp writing: *Aglait Illunainortut* (The Paper for Everybody). Far away from those who read these lines, shut in their lonely land by the great ice-barrier, the missionaries are standing at their posts; and by their quiet labours, it seems to me, they are working out the saving of a nation.

I lay my pen aside, with my mind still full of the memories that are so vivid to me. Brown, smiling faces pass before me; familiar names sound in my ears; bright eyes look into mine; musical voices sing outside my window; gruff shouts echo as the boys come sliding down the hill; Jerry and his bandsmen march along, waking the village with their trumpet notes;

the poor girl on the bed of reindeer skins whispers her "Nakomêk;" the crowd on the slope of the frozen beach sings me off into the storm; the voice of little Johannes calls above the whining of the dogs; and as I bid adieu to my neighbours the Eskimos I pass on to my reader the noble old greeting that I heard so often—

"AKSUNAI."

INDEX

A

Abia, 103, 112
Accidents, 63, 74, 181, 184, 219, 234
Adoptions, 80
Akpik, 71
Aksunai (meaning of), 26, 51
Alaska, 22, 23

B

Baby, 81
Baffin's Land, 23, 211
Band, 332, 333
Barrenness of Labrador, 22, 38, 47
Bears, 29, 43, 200, 205, 231, 256
Beliefs, heathen, 29, 43
Benjamin, 99, 272
Benjie, 305
Berries, 38, 285
Birthdays, 101
Blowhole, 244
Bob, 27
Boots, 32, 58, 59, 109, 140
Boys, 92, 235, 246
Bravery, 75, 181, 257, 267, 268, 275, 277
Bunting, snow, 98, 241
Button Islands, 27, 28, 29, 256

C

Carpenters, Eskimo, 261, 262, 269, 273
Carving, ivory, 105
Character, Eskimo, 21, 102, 103, 156, 161, 185, 189, 202, 221, 230, 234, 247, 251, 270, 273, 285, 293, 294, 304, 313, 316, 336, 337
Charm of Labrador, 46, 48
Children, 31, 80 ff., 263
Choice of names, 87 ff.
Christmas, 63, 331
Cleanliness, 109, 315
Clothing, 27, 31, 58, 108
Cod, 253, 254
Cold, 55, 59, 60, 120, 132, 162, 186, 212, 248
Cooking, 31, 32, 196, 280
Cousins, 278, 298
Customs, Eskimo, 70, 71, 76, 78, 90, 152, 153, 211, 223, 225, 232, 251, 278, 295, 326, 333
Cut-throat, 243

D

Daniel, 193 ff., 229
Dignity, 68, 102
Direction, sense of, 187, 189, 236
Doctors, Eskimo, 289 ff.
Dogs, 46, 62, 94, 119, 122, 137, 144, 147 ff., 159, 160, 175, 183, 239, 242, 256, 261, 324, 327
—— danger from, 150, 153
—— disentangling the, 173
—— feeding the, 152, 164
Dolls, 91
Drink, 336

E

Education, 338
Embroidery, 108

INDEX

Endurance, 34, 35, 112, 137, 162, 167, 197, 277, 299
Eskimo, meaning of, 281
Eskimos, their origin, 22
—— appearance of, 43, 50, 215
—— the, 123, 141, 176, 211, 248, 256, 279, 337

F

Family likeness, 31, 85
Fatalism, 294, 297
Fever, 129, 138
Fishing, 73, 112, 113, 247, 253
Flowers, 47, 284
Food, 70, 131, 165, 240, 279
Foxes, 226, 227, 229
Frost-bite, 120, 169, 182
Frozen meat, 217
Furs, 226, 227, 230

G

Games, 91
Gardens, 326, 327
Good-humour, 34, 316
Government, village, 324 ff.
Graves, heathen, 23, 43, 99, 136
Gray's Straits, 26, 27
Greenland, 22, 23, 246
Guns, 185, 205, 233 ff.
Gustaf, 217, 229

H

Happy Hunting Grounds, 43
Harmony, the, 25, 48, 55, 256, 274, 319, 321
Harpoon, 24, 98, 205 ff., 219
Health, 129, 308
Heathen beliefs, 24, 43
—— graves, 23, 43, 99, 136
Hebron, 49, 106, 114, 119, 124, 129, 137, 142, 144, 145, 275
Heredity, 85, 97, 109
Hospital, Okak, 51, 260, 264, 267, 279, 302
Houses, Eskimo, 201, 212, 307 ff. *See* Iglo
Humour, sense of, 64, 155, 196, 288, 317, 335
Hunting, 24, 28, 72, 204 ff.

I

Ice, 56, 57, 96, 194, 214
—— breaking, 249
—— new, 56, 139
Iglo, 38, 136, 307
Imitation, 216, 313
Indians, 110, 111, 281
Influenza, 129, 291
Innuit, 22, 28, 43
Invitation, Eskimo, 125
Island, Resolution, 29, 43
Islands, Button, 27, 28, 29
Ivory carving, 105

J

Jakko, 219
Jakobus, 241
Jerry, 114, 115, 117, 119, 145, 204 ff., 237, 272, 302, 321, 323, 332
Jigger, 73
Johannes, 133, 134, 154 ff., 162, 170, 182 ff., 218, 237
John, 143, 144
—— little, 66 ff.
Josef, 271, 317, 322
Joshua, 106, 107
Juliana, 58, 272, 280, 289
Julius, 64, 114, 115, 117, 119, 120, 145, 149, 154 ff., 170 ff., 182 ff., 308

K

Kajak (canoe), 24, 28, 30, 96, 204, 218, 246, 324
Ketture, 278

INDEX

Kiglapeit Mountains, 167, 174, 176, 177, 184, 197, 198
Killinek, 25 ff., 117, 256, 288, 331
Kivgat, the, 334, 335
Kristian, 153, 170 ff.

L

Labrador, 21, 25, 46, 47, 48, 64, 129, 180, 181, 211, 241, 307, 319, 322, 326, 330, 332, 333, 337
Language, Eskimo, 247, 261, 266, 293, 328
Laziness, 104
Literature, 339
Lizetta, 287, 297
Lukas, 224

M

Maria, 266, 270, 292
Martin, Bishop, 115
—— 223 ff.
Meat-tinning, 326
Medicine, 266, 289
Mêlê, 227 ff.
Mice, 47, 241, 285, 327
Missionaries, Moravian, 24, 330 ff.
Missionary at Okak, 51, 52, 54, 58, 265
Morals, 334, 337
Mosquitoes, 258
Motor boat, 302 ff.
Mugford, Cape, 73, 276
Mushrooms, 285
Music, 65, 318, 332

N

Nain, 170, 182, 189, 200, 277
Names, 87
Nappartok, 64, 145, 147
Nennok (white bear), 256, 257
Newfoundland, 254
Newspaper, Eskimo, 299, 339
Nipko, 282, 283, 284
Northern Star, the, 302

O

Odour, characteristic, 312
Okak, 44, 47, 49, 79, 99, 106, 108, 109, 115, 117, 129, 215, 248, 257, 335
Old age, 111
Organist, Eskimo, 210, 332
Ornaments, 310
Otok-hunting, 245

P

Parkavik, 121, 320
Partridge, 168, 231, 283
Paulus, 50, 208, 231, 283, 301
Pocket, the Eskimo, 109
Postman, 322
Proportion, sense of, 118
Puppies, 95, 310

R

Rain, 34, 156
Ramah, 49
Raven, 151
Rebekah, 267
Reindeer, 232 ff.
Resolution Island, 29, 43
Rifle, 205
Rings of stones, 30
Running, 188, 276

S

Saeglek, 128
Samuel, 65, 103, 112
Sarah, 270, 293, 316
School, 99, 338
—— teachers, 99, 172, 211, 272, 338
Scurvy, 284
Sea, freezing of, 56
Seal, 35, 207, 209, 213, 223, 228, 243 ff., 256, 309

INDEX

Seal meat, 70, 284
Seals, uses of, 243
Shark, 43, 208, 213
Shergo, 127
Simon, Rev. H., Missionary at Okak, 52, 265
Simplicity, 69, 102, 228, 274, 338
Siná, 217 ff.
Singing, 102, 172, 200, 271, 278, 321
Skating, 57
Sledge, making a, 114 ff.
—— strength of, 61, 222
Sleeping-bag, 166, 175
Smoking, 110, 259
Snow-clearing, 325
Snow-houses, 36, 37, 161, 162 ff., 175, 307
Snow-knife, 162
Snow, soft (Mauja), 146, 176
Storm, 74, 143, 176, 181, 186, 237, 303
Superstitions, 41 ff., 295
Surgery, Eskimo, 171, 276

T

Temper, 103, 246
Tent (tupek), 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 243, 255
Thrift, 286
Tôk, 61, 113
Torngak, 42, 211
Toys, 99
Training of children, 82, 91, 98. *See* School
Training of dogs, 94, 95
Travelling box, 135
Trees, 38, 64, 65, 115, 139
Trout, 113, 247
Tuglavi, 39, 40, 41
Tuktu (reindeer), 231 ff., 239
Tutjârluk, 29
Tutjat, 27, 28, 29
Typhus fever, 138

U

Uivak, 133, 141

V

Vegetables, 284, 326, 327, 328
Veronica, 274, 283, 302, 329

W

Walrus, 24, 25, 28, 106, 133, 205, 221
Washing, 110, 315
Water-fetching, 61
Water-finding, 169
Wedding, 76
Whip, 94, 148, 150, 160
Wolf, 22, 167, 231
Wolverine, 230
Woman, travelling, 123
Work, men's, 104, 105
—— women's, 68, 105, 107, 112, 287
Workmen, Eskimo, 261, 262

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